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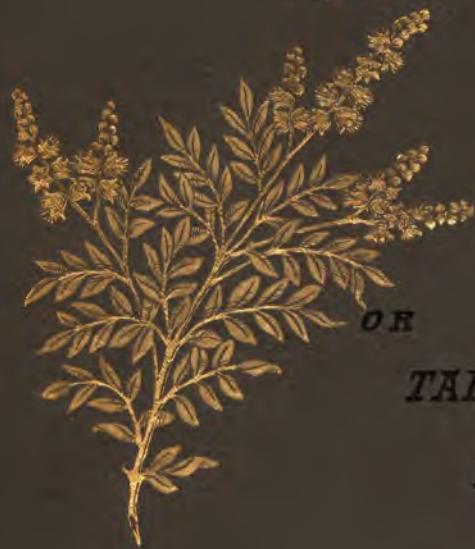
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# GARDEN GRAITH

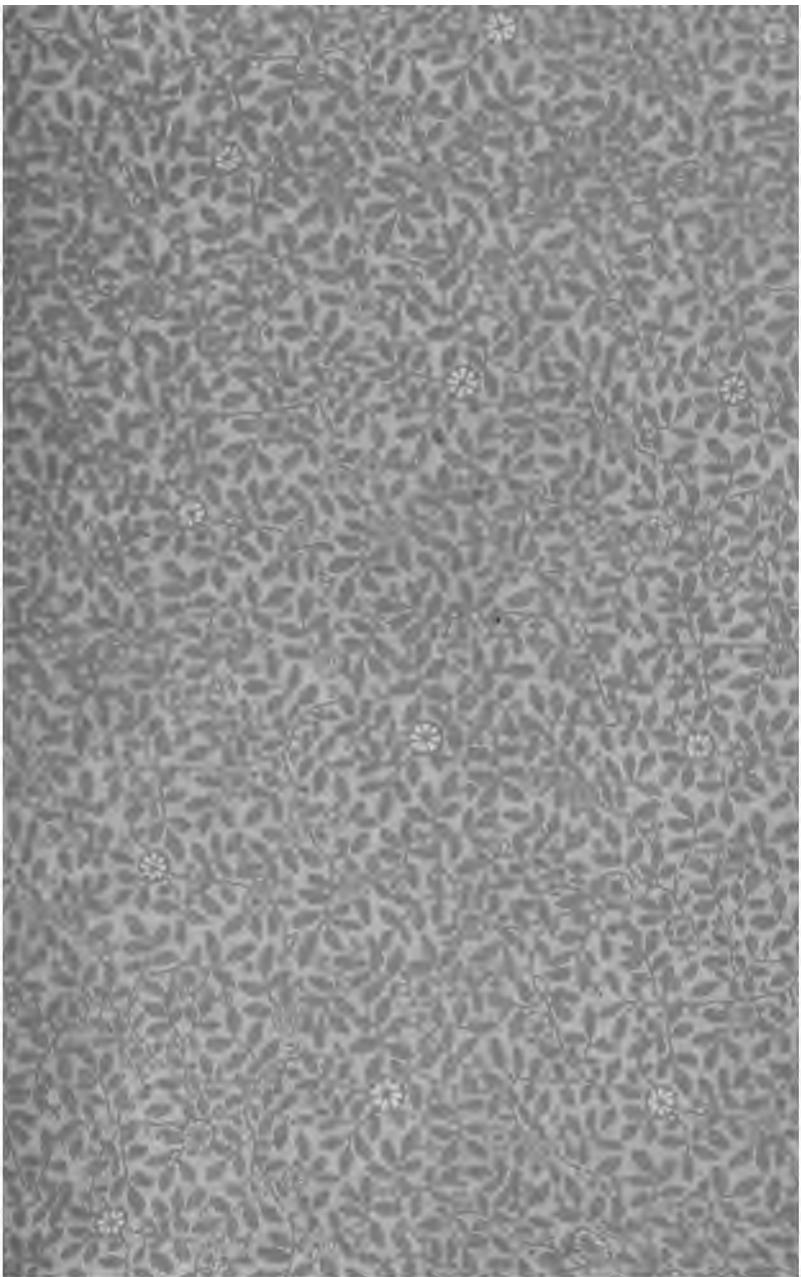


TALKS AMONG  
*MY FLOWERS*

SARAH F. SMILEY.

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**GARDEN GRAITH.**



# GARDEN GRAITH;

OR,

*TALKS AMONG MY FLOWERS.*

BY

SARAH F. SMILEY,

AUTHOR OF "THE FULNESS OF BLESSING."

"Truth has her pleasure grounds, haunts of ease  
And easy contemplation—gay parterres,  
And labyrinthine walks, her sunny glades  
And shady groves for recreation framed.  
There may be range, if willing to partake  
Their soft indulgences, and in due time  
May issue thence, recruited for the tasks  
And course of service Truth requires from those  
Who tend her altars, wait upon her throne,  
And guard her fortresses."—WORDSWORTH.

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## TO MY FRIENDS.

The pleasure which is unshared by others is but half a pleasure; and one of the chief delights of a garden is found in its peculiar power of permitting others to participate in its bounty. Yet this is at the best a limited privilege; and it has given me great joy to gather out of mine a higher and less perishable treasure, and to share it now with a wider circle—trusting that some of these thoughts will fade less quickly than the flowers, and that here and there a seed may fall which may bear some heavenly fruit. I shall be thankful indeed, if that which has been a recreation in the midst of more earnest work, can thus be made to contribute its little share of service for the Master.

SARATOGA SPRINGS, November, 1880.



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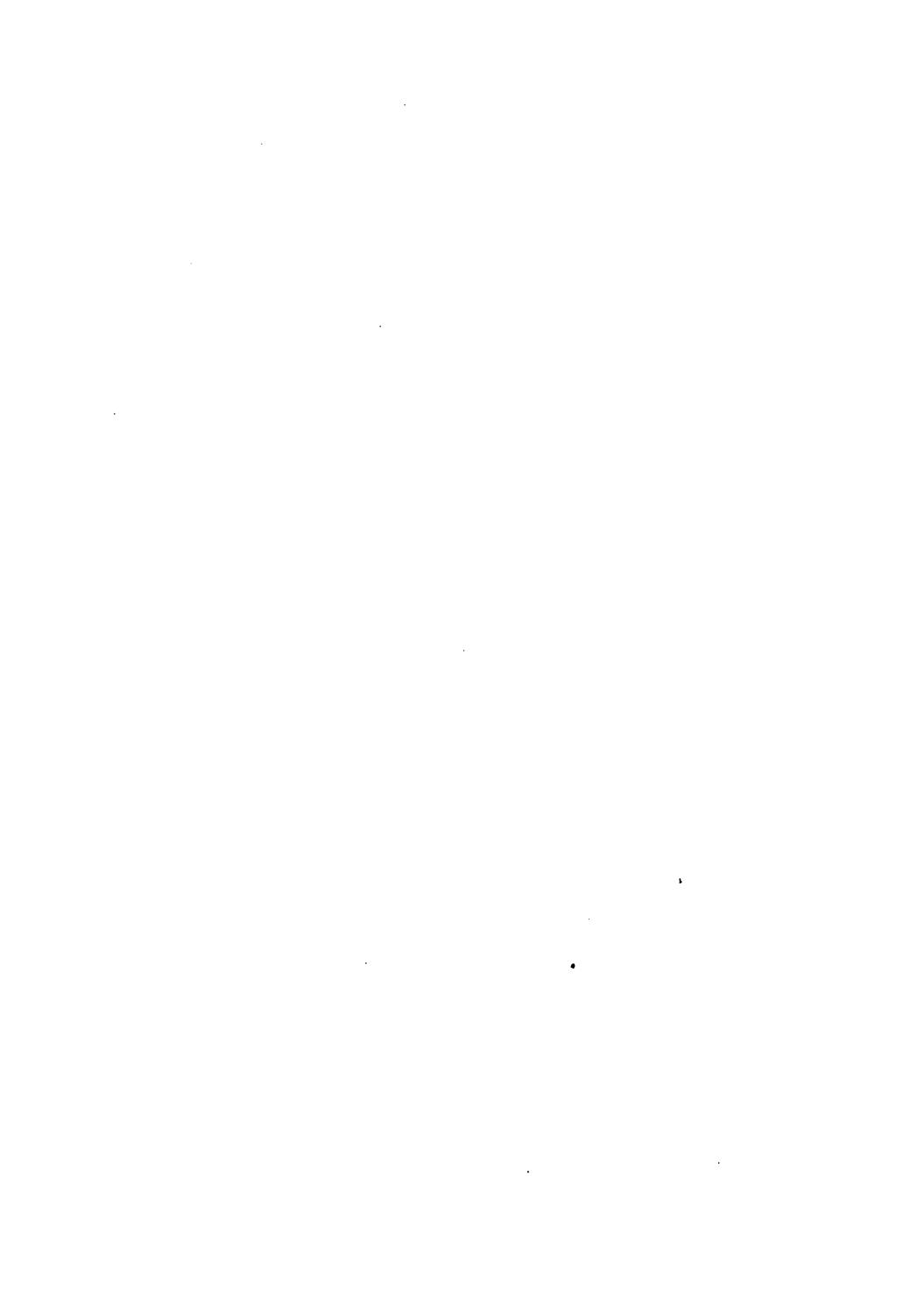
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I.

The Garden Itself.



## I.

### The Garden Itself.

“Lord! all Thy works are lessons,—each contains  
Some emblem of man’s all-containing soul;  
Shall he make fruitless all Thy glorious pains,  
Delving within Thy grace an eyeless mole?  
Make me the least of Thy Dodona-grove,  
Cause me some message of Thy truth to bring,  
Speak but a word through me, nor let Thy love  
Among my boughs disdain to perch and sing.”

LOWELL.

“And the Lord God planted a garden in Eden. . . . . And the Lord God took the man, and put him into the garden of Eden to dress it and to keep it” (Gen. ii. 8-15). O for a moment’s vision of *that* garden!—planted by His own hands, who beholding all that He had made to be very good, and His fair world yet without sin, could in His holy leisure gather up the choicest of His creations, and group them in a garden, and so hand them over to be the

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joy of His yet unfallen children—showing Himself thus in His first act towards man to be the giving God,—giving liberally, giving lovingly. Has such a thought as this ever come to you, dear friends, as you looked at some exquisite flower, or on some tree of surpassing stateliness and symmetry—perchance the seed of this came originally from Eden, or this may be a shoot of one of those self-same trees beneath the shadow of which their own Creator walked? Flowers have ever seemed to me an unfallen part of earth—mementos of Eden, and pledges of Paradise. Who can walk in a garden—much less dress it and keep it—without the thought of that garden being ever present as the great ideal? Look at Eve among her flowers;—giving new loveliness from out her love—taking them delightedly yet reverently from the hand of God, and learning from each something more of Him who surely made no meaningless form or tint, but with every touch of His forming hand put upon them also a thought of His heart. Behold her then considering her lilies, and finding as she looked and mused an interchange of ministry—they, for her tender training, teaching new joys of communion with her

God. And now that the innocence has gone forever, has this also perished from the earth? Surely not! And in all thankfulness and reverence—not indeed in Eden, but only in this little garden plot of Elim—I may claim both the unfallen flowers, and somewhat of that fellowship that made her bliss. True, I can not have here the bursting beauty of that new world, and her open vision of Jehovah; but not even for that would I exchange the glory that from the Cross floods a new creation in Christ Jesus, and the blessed hope of all that shall be, when this redemption is completed. Dark and dreadful are the shadows that rest long upon our poor world. But all along the shadows fall the rays of revelation; not faint and flickering, but steady as letters of graven gold; and however few in number, there are enough to spell out one soul-cheering promise,—“SUBJECTED IN HOPE.” “The creation itself also shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the liberty of the glory of the children of God.”

So we will even leave the study and its dearly treasured books, and come out into the garden, where the voice of God is yet audible, and look and listen together, and learn what He has to

teach us out of His own handiwork. We will go down the hill into the hollow, and take our seats in the little arbor that encircles the tall elm-tree, and here with the garden spread out before us we will watch its growth as the seasons pass on, and gather up its graith\* as our more lasting possession. Let me beg of you not to despise through pride of learning the simple lessons of the flowers. Listen to George Herbert's thoughtful counsel—

“These are Thy wonders, Lord of love,  
To make us see we are but flowers that glide:  
Which when we once can find and prove,  
Thou hast a garden for us, where to bide.  
Who would be more,  
Swelling through store,  
Forfeit their Paradise by their pride.”

For myself I must acknowledge that many a truth which books have never taught me has been found here; and that the lessons are oft-times as searching as they are ever simple and sweet.

Here then we will be at our ease. We will

\* Graith—*furniture; goods; riches* (North of England).—Worcester's Dictionary. Somewhat different definitions are given in Webster, and still others in Ogilvie's Imperial Dictionary.

drop all our stiffness, and relax the strain of abstract thought, and so rest and renew our spirits. Right welcome are you all, as you turn hither in your thought, to the green grass and fair flowers and the shadows of my patriarchal oaks. And that you may know it more as I know it, let me give you in brief its simple story.

Seven years ago this was no garden, but a wild and well-nigh barren spot. There was a steep and rugged hillside sloping southward, and on its brow, a little from the roadside, three old oaks, the growth of centuries, and at its foot this one elm; as for the rest, thorns and briars, wild grass and weeds. And so my joy has come, not from the placing of a perfect gift in my hands, but through slow triumphs over many obstacles—so turning at last desolation into beauty. Yet even thus have I learned most. My garden redeemed is a truer microcosm of the world of human hearts.

Some of you will remember how we took possession—how as a sort of consecration of the spot to its new service, the thicket of thorns and briars was mown down, and then in the autumn twilight heaped high by the children

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for a bonfire. So it was set apart, in hope that it might sometime prove worthy of the valley that smiled before it, and the amphitheatre of richly wooded hills that rose to meet the horizon. Ah, but none of you can know the care and toil that followed. It was so easy to plan it all beforehand in the mind's eye—the smooth little lawn of grass that should front the cozy cottage nestling beneath the oaks; the green slope southward that should still keep a natural outline, swelling here and sinking there; the little path with its stone steps winding down the hill, past the spring and tiny brook to the gate, into the meadow; the clumps of shrubbery, the flower beds, and the border. But all these years have only imperfectly wrought out that plan. Set down in the midst of enemies, if I may so name the old inhabitants of the hillside, I have had to learn Israel's lesson,—"By little and little shalt thou drive them out." I did expect and thought it but reasonable to have my grass grow smooth and green at once. But I have reached the conclusion that a garden's greatest of all attainments is mere grass. You smile significantly, for you have learned some of you at least, dear friends

that the merely sweet and simple graces are the most difficult to sustain in your souls. Lowliness and meekness, humbleness of mind, the freshness of your spirits in the dew of your youth—these are likest to “the small, soft, sweet grass.” To be thus in your homes, and in your common callings, may seem to some things little to speak of; but there is nothing like unto it, for it is the only fair setting of all else that may seem more fair.

And here I must digress a little, to tell you what I have been taught by this same grass; for in my little garden pulpit this was the first preacher. When I was about to sow the grass seed, there was no small stir in many circles as to the nature of sanctification. There were not a few who claimed that it should be at once both instantaneous and entire, and an often quoted phrase was this, “the eradication of the roots of evil.” The analogy of nature can never be positive proof of any point of doctrine; still it often more than illustrates, and in this case it very strikingly confirmed the teaching of Holy Scripture. There was indeed a definite day when I purposed to have a weedless lawn, and not only purposed, but with

the utmost care had it prepared, enriched, and sown. Certainly not a weed was there, and as the purest seed that it was possible to obtain was sown, all seemed hopeful. Soft showers followed and I watched with delight the shooting of the tiny blades. All looked prosperous. Here and there indeed some other suspicious looking growth was visible, but the grass would surely outgrow it. So I was busy hither and thither, till one day my friend from the cottage over yonder was passing and saluted me facetiously, "What a fine crop of lamb's-quarters!" I was startled. Yes, there were weeds indeed, and my friends were even having some sport over it. But where did they come from? Were they in the soil? In the fertilizers? In the seed? Perhaps in all. At any rate there they were, and the wiser question was, what can now be done? After all, I said, this can soon be set right. No weed is so easy to pull up, and there shall soon be an end of this. So they vanished. But alas! many a bare spot was left, and in a short time instead of the green grass spreading, what was this I saw? Purslane! Roman wormwood! sorrel! thistles!—a whole army of weeds. Still I persevered. I had them mown down. With

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my own hands I pulled them up. As often as the soft showers loosened the long roots, I went forth with my basket, and counted the slain by thousands. But always before another shower a thousand more had sprung up. Moreover when all that I think were originally there had developed and disappeared, the winds drifted in the foul seed from the roadside. The tall ox-eye daisy and dandelion came in battalions. So I saw that it was a question of unceasing vigilance; and have patiently continued, weeding and weeding still, these seven years. Now indeed no passer-by can easily see the smallest weed on that green sward; but *I* see them often; and though the task is easier, vastly easier, now, yet were I to give up my watchfulness a while, there would soon be a sad relapse. But more of this when I come to tell you of the lessons learned from weeds. I was to show you my garden first, before we began to gather up its treasures.

The centre of my little domain is a spring welling forth in the hollow below the oaks. Some other day you shall hear its little history also, and the lesson of its life. Its waters pass into the tiniest of all little brooks in the

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short course of which is a sort of toy-lake. A smaller you never saw; but I doubt if any other large or small was ever the source of more happiness. Even while we have been talking, the beautiful Baltimore oriole has brought down her young brood from their nest in the elm-tree above us, to take their first bath, and they are frolicsome as children over this new experience. I can never tell what delight it has given me to watch from my balcony the birds at their bathing; coming as they do all through the heat of summer, not unfrequently by hundreds at a time, and for the sake of that clear, pebbly pool making this their chosen haunt, and filling the air with their song the whole day long. It adds wonderfully to the beauty and interest of my garden that it is not a silent picture but full of busiest life. At almost any hour, I can catch the light of golden plumage, or a flash of flame, or the spread of wings so blue that they might seem little fragments of low floating sky. And always, flitting this way and that, can be seen the soft gray or brown of some little warbler, now and then a glossy woodpecker making the rapid circuit of the oaks, while the robin in spite of all his mis-

chief parades the place upon his feet, with all the confidence of an acknowledged chief. So fearless are they that the little phœbe builds above my door, and the first flight of her young is often into my chamber. Once when the wild winds of autumn rocked the great oaks to and fro till the birds were shaken from their shelter, amid the roar of the storm a strange sound was heard at my window: they were tapping earnestly, entreatingly for entrance; and once admitted, allowed me to close my hand upon them without a struggle.

But you can not sit long in the arbor without seeing another form of happy life. Look, one of my little squirrels comes rushing down the hillside at full speed in search of me. He stops almost at my feet, and resting his pretty striped tail upon the grass, sits upright, with paws folded easily over his fawn colored breast, looking steadily at me with those clear keen eyes. He will wait till he sees me absorbed; and then will creep stealthily up and push playfully against my feet; but the moment I look up, off he darts with an affected air of the utmost terror, taking good care however to have one last peep to make sure of my seeing it all

before he drops so deftly into one of his many round doorways in the turf. Were I to tell you half the winsome ways of my family of squirrels I should weary you; and some of you might be slow to credit their doings. Ah! little do people imagine the power we might have over the animal world, making pets of other things than cats and dogs. I can not claim to have ever learned one deep spiritual lesson from these little friends of mine; but the service they have rendered me is none the less. A certain dash and brightness about them drew my admiration at first, and next their unwearied efforts to *tame me* won upon me till I returned to the full their fondness for my presence. Among all living things my little squirrels are to me the best pattern of unvarying cheer. The pewee grows painfully plaintive as the summer wears on, as though calling hopelessly for a wandering mate, and the oriole's coaxing charge—trilled out so sweetly in spring—"Take care, Cherry dear; take care," grows at length sensibly shorter and sharper in a fault-finding note. Not so my squirrels. I never saw a dull, dispirited look or a laggard movement, while their varieties of sport are manifold. Especially do

they delight to join me in the early morning—chasing each other at full tilt down the long line of fence, or with a more steady, business-like air trotting incessantly up and down the winding garden walk. I remember often to my comfort that the great commission of the Gospel (Mark xvi. 15) does not stop short with man, but extends, as the learned Bengel shows, and Dean Alford clearly admits, to *all creatures* having life. So I consider that my birds and squirrels have solid Christian claims upon my interest and affection; while the intense happiness of their lives is a constant and beautiful lesson of God's great love.

And now we must look at the flowers. We will leave for those who only see them from the avenue the few that are planted in front, where they struggle with the full force of the winds. Here in the hollow where we are seated in a sacred seclusion, is the veritable flower garden. And first of all you will note that mass of forget-me-not below the little lakelet, the trickling drops from its sides giving the needful moisture. Planted here a solitary sprig—as a little German exotic—the true poet's forget-me-not, the warmth of this ever-flowing

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spring enables it to survive the severe winters; and it has spread in wild profusion till its mass of delicate blue smiles upon you as though it were the truer lake. There is no blue like *that* among all the flowers, and a lively French writer has told us that nature is very sparing of her blue. There they bloom unweariedly from April to November, ready to send out troops of little comforters and cheerers to loved homes and lonely hospitals beds. And next you will notice the vines—the Virginia creeper that drapes all the cottage windows, the bitter-sweet that mounts the balcony, the graceful Alleghany vine, the woodbine, and the climbing roses and the Catalonian jessamine that are clinging to the eight columns of our little arbor; and you notice how above the awning that tents us from the sunshine the Virginia creeper has made its way fully fifty feet up the elm-tree and has spread out upon its arms. Ah! but you should see it in autumn when it shows from the balcony like a crimson cross. Other and choicer vines are half hidden here and there, beginning lives of much promise for the future. But one you will find at every turn—our native clematis or virgin's bower. That little Gothic trellis near my door

is completely overhung with it. Few vines are so pretty at every stage. Its dark green leaves are peculiarly effective, and the twisting leaf stalks by which alone it climbs present a curious study of contrivance. The buds just before opening are of extreme beauty, while the long festoons of clustered starry flowers of a soft creamy white are next in loveliness to the orange blossom. Then follow the silken curls of pale olive green which adorn the seed, changing last of all into the gray feathery plumes which become it like the soft white locks of age. I was long in having it in perfection from not understanding another of its idiosyncrasies. In the early spring you would think its long slender stems quite dead, looking indeed like old straws and being as brittle to the touch. So I had it all torn down. In one spot a single stem was overlooked and to my utter astonishment slowly and surely life made its way again, and greenness and suppleness returned, till it was a rich wreath of bloom and beauty. So now as I go over it in spring, touching it most tenderly in the training it needs—all ragged and forlorn as it appears—I muse upon the meaning of this and say to myself, “Who can tell but that in higher

orders of being where there is an utter look of death, life is yet waiting to return, and to restore all things.

As we sit here we are compassed with foliage and flowers. Within the hedge of Norway pine there is a group of stately cannas; and half hidden in the shrubbery is a large low mound of maiden-hair and native ferns, and in its centre a fountain feeding them with a weeping mist. As this is the "free-and-easy" corner, all else is growing in clusters and clumps; here a mass of richly marked oxalis and there a tangle of the so-called coliseum vine. Up the hill on one side is my verbena bed, revelling in a blaze of sunshine; and on the other rests a broad crown of ruby and gold that shows afar off, even from the distant hills. By the way, no color is so effective at a distance as yellow. And now going out into the opposite corner of this valley, we come upon my little pleasure ground; where the grass is green and soft as in our dear old motherland, and the flowers, sheltered from the winds, and set in moist and mellow soil, grow after one's own heart. Small as it is you would be astonished at the actual variety to be found there. Here grow all those

lovely things that have but a brief glory, and then are content to sink back unnoticed and give place to others. Here too are the flowers that are sown and spring up each year—a score of kinds at least. And here too grow all those choice bits that one loves to gather up for a beloved friend—fragrant blossoms and leaves and fairy grasses.

But I see that your eyes are wandering from this to rest upon that stretch of valley and meadow beyond; and where the knolls swell upward to the west, flecked with rich shadows from grand old trees—and there where the pine covered hills rise eastward, and the road winds upward in the open space in a fine curve past the healing springs, and up to the height where the mountains burst upon your vision; and last of all that hanging forest southward that comes down with richly varied green to the very edge of the stream that you see flowing beneath the stone arch yonder—Restful, peaceful, and growing more and more fair to the eyes that look longest: not overpowering, not exacting by reason of rare beauty, permitting one to think one's own thoughts sometimes, and not saying as some grand prospects do, “Look evermore

on us;" for which reason one could not well live and work among them.

Some of you from your wide domains and trim gardens may smile at the smallness of mine. But simply because it is such, and without any other pretence than merely to take the good and common gifts which God has given, and use them gratefully, it places itself beyond the proper range of criticism. It is not for display, but for enjoyment, and for true love of that which the Lord has fashioned so fair.

And now we have lying open before us our little text book of truth, the motto of which we will do well to study silently in our secret souls, until we have made sure of our sympathy with our great Teacher and His ways of teaching us—"THE INVISIBLE THINGS OF HIM FROM THE CREATION OF THE WORLD ARE CLEARLY SEEN, BEING UNDERSTOOD BY THE THINGS THAT ARE MADE, EVEN HIS ETERNAL POWER AND GODHEAD."

II.

*Seed Sowing.*



## II.

### Seed Sowing.

“Earth can not long ensepulchre  
In her dark depths the tiniest seed;  
When life begins to throb and stir,  
The bands of death are weak indeed.  
No clods its upward course deter,  
Calmly it makes its path to day;  
One germ of life is mightier  
Than a whole universe of clay.”

It is early spring—so early that not a flower or green leaf, or even a blade of grass, can be seen in all my garden, that still wears its mantle of snow. But it is not too early to prepare for brighter days. I hold in my hands a package of seeds. These are the possibilities of my garden. In such *little* things, in things that seem utterly unlike those that are desired, in things that are almost as naught, are gathered up in

embryo all the beauty and the glory that I confidently expect yet to rejoice in.

Let me look closely at one of them. It is a hard black speck, without one sign of life. Let me forget that I have ever watched this marvel of development, and turn rationalist for a moment. Am I required to believe that out of this will come forth a plant, tall and spreading, with all grace of foliage, and then a flower with petals frail as gossamer and most delicately tinted, and that the only preliminary is that this seed shall be buried a while in the moist, brown earth? How?—how?—how?—I ask but in vain; coming back to accept the simple fact that it has been.

As I take up the little seeds, a voice whispers, “That which thou sowest, thou sowest not that body that shall be,” and I sit and ponder the promise, “a spiritual body,” “raised in glory,” “raised in power.” And let no one tell me that the one marvel is a repeated fact in the past, and the other only an unproved hope. The resurrection is also an accomplished fact—“Now is *Christ risen* from the dead, and become the first fruits of them that slept.” Our human nature became a celestial flower when it was

fertilized from heaven. And we shall be like Him.

I take up one of these tiny treasures and adore the wisdom of its Creator. That He should fashion one flower was a little thing to this—that He should be able thus to store up all its potentialities in such a way that it may be carried safely around the globe, that it can resist all the frosts of winter, that it might be trampled on unharmed, or even lie biding its time in some dark tomb for centuries.

What lesson has my Lord for me here? What is there among the invisible and spiritual things that can be seen and understood by this? I turn to His sermon upon the sea-shore, and I read these simple words, “The seed is the Word;”—that is, the Word is like a seed. When a message from the Master comes to a human heart, how few understand what is wrapped within it, and to what it will expand if only received and nurtured. How few pause even to consider—like a seed, so small and unimportant in its seeming; so easily lost by the careless; and calling for so much co-operative care, after the great Creator has shown all His care in forming and furnishing it.

In His parable our Lord distinctly points out this analogy in describing the first failure—"He that heareth the Word and *understandeth it not*." He does not see that it has Christ in it—and heaven in it! Never could he be so foolish as to fling away the full-grown flower or fruit, but this seed, of what account is that? And so Satan "cometh and catcheth away that which was sown in his heart." None will ever treasure it unless God give with it a spirit of understanding.

And what a lesson is there here for all those to whom the Lord entrusts the sowing of His seed. Do they prepare the soil for it? Do they choose wisely both the time and place for sowing it? Surely if the Spirit always guided in this, there would not be such waste of seed.

I once had an extraordinary dream upon this wise. I was in the midst of my Bible class of young ladies, but instead of having a Bible in my hand, I had upon my arm a little basket of seeds; and passing from one to another I placed a few in the hands of each. But the hands were held listlessly. Few of them clasped the seed, and by the time I had finished my round nearly all of it was scattered upon the floor. I

was about to utter some reproof, when suddenly this thought arrested me, It is *I* who merit rebuke, *I* who have been careless, *I* who am responsible for all this waste I see around me. I have not even told them how choice is the seed. So I paused and said earnestly, "My dear girls, I should have told you what I was giving you. Look for a moment at this little seed. It is very small and most easily lost, but if you will but keep it, and sow it, and watch its growth, it will give you by and by the most exquisite and fragrant flowers. And this, still smaller, will become a vine that will cover your window or some porch or trellis, giving you shade and sweetness. And this, somewhat larger, if you can only wait with patience for a few years, will yield you delicious and refreshing fruit." So saying I began a second round; and now every hand was outstretched to take all that I would give.

Yes, these tiny seeds teach us deep lessons of the power of both faith and hope. All true life, in proportion to its elevation above the mere physical plane, has to be more and more lived, through looking at the things which are not seen; and probably the most of the seed

sown in us and by us awaits a summer beyond this present age: so that the very chief of our rejoicing must needs be "*in hope.*"

And our little seed fails not to teach us also the necessity for the "*patience* of hope." "The husbandman waiteth for the precious fruit of the earth, and hath long patience for it, until he receive the early and latter rain." Very rarely indeed do we receive any good gift out of the spiritual treasures of our God in ripe completeness at the first. It would be as difficult to put a full-grown grace into the soul, as it is to transplant a full-grown tree.

All our hope for the multiplication and spread of good and beautiful things, whether earthly or heavenly, depends upon seeds and shoots and slips. It seems in nearly all instances an essential prerequisite both of our full enjoyment and our wise use of these good gifts, that we should be slowly trained through waiting and watching. That tree whose slow but steady growth we have watched, since first with our own hands we planted the sapling, what significance its size assumes as the years roll on!

Nor can we forget in looking at these old giants saved from the forest primeval, that some

one else has waited and watched. This slow and solid building up of the column of a great tree has a grandeur entirely unique in nature. The vast cathedral column was hewn slowly and skilfully, and it therefore has its majesty; but these grew with only God's own hand to shape them, and He was content to build even slower than we build, with here a little and there a little. One little life cell followed another, and then one more little fibre slowly stretched its line from the expanding leaf down to the hidden root, and at last out of weakness it was made strong, so that the awful fury of the tempest and the wrath of the whirlwind are hurled against it in vain. Exquisite and almost perfect type of the growth of holy character, of the building up in strength and beauty, of man in the likeness of God! The silent, constant appropriation of all the supplies within its reach, the working of them into its own being, the converting of all things that touch it within, into its own greatness, is the same process alike in the tree and in the soul of man.

The spirit grows by all its silent sympathy with the truth of God, by every moment's meditation upon things above, by every secret fast-

ening of its affections upon Christ, by every acceptance of that which He sends, and then most of all by every carrying out into act of the power of this hidden life.

It is deeply interesting, in counting the circles of a section of some old tree, to note the variations; some circles being almost imperceptible for narrowness, and some so broad that you fear almost to have counted two as one. As you count the outer circles your memory reaching back to those years can show a cause for this difference. The years of drought are the years of little growth.

For the tree as for our spirits, it holds true that "a man can receive nothing except it be given him from heaven." There are surely seasons when one can make little increase save under exceptional circumstances—such as those of a tree by the riverside which shows little variation. It drew supplies from an abiding source.

Precisely this sweet secret it is that finds expression in the first psalm, "He shall be like a tree planted by the rivers of water." They who live near the Lord, who delight themselves in His law and meditate on it day and night, are ever growing and fruitful.

But I must return to my seed sowing. What certainty there is in the product of a seed, what perfect fidelity to its type. I am holding some now in my hand that I gathered myself the last summer—the seed of the Rocky Mountain columbine. From these glistening grains I forecast their future; I see clearly the graceful arrangement of the deep-green leaflets, the central cup of snowy white, and around it the guard of sky-blue spurs where the humming bird will hang with quivering wings while he sips their nectar. I know to an absolute certainty that as surely as this seed reaches its full development, such will be the flower. I know that no possible freak of nature can transform it into a rose or pansy or forget-me-not. I know also that it will not have those tints of gold and flame that were worn by its sisters growing close at its side. I remember how unvarying is the law, “to every seed its own body.”

And when I apply all this to the heavenly seed, and consider that “the word of truth” is the outgoing of the eternal personal Word, and that thus we are born of God, how sure a thing it seems that when our hour of true maturity arrives, then we shall be like Him.

I do not marvel that the Apostle John, pondering these heavenly laws as we the earthly, and his thought filled with this divine necessity of love to beget its like, should emphasize as he does the impossibility of failure where this law of life works unhindered—"Whosoever is born of God doth not commit sin; for his seed remaineth in him, and he can not sin, because he is born of God;" and all the more that I realize God's perfect provision of power and faithfulness, do I recognize man's responsibility for perfect trust and fidelity.

Among the seeds that I am sowing to-day are some that will never bloom, and yet the self-same powers are in them now. Alas for the failure that is all too possible in the human receptivity! It is this indeed that so powerfully stamps the parable of the sower and his seed, and that colors more or less the whole series of seven that Jesus gave at that time. The warning note through all is—"Take heed how ye hear," how ye receive. That mighty problem of the apparent free-will of man must await the revealing of some of the now secret things of God; but so far as present truth is concerned, the surest provisions and promises of God turn practically for

each soul upon this, "I do not frustrate the grace of God."

And yet in no instance is this perfect likeness the immediate result of life. I shall not be dismayed when in the first two tiny leaflets of any of my plants I can trace little resemblance to the parental type. I know that it signifies infancy, not failure. And, moreover, there are instances in which I shall not see a failure, even in much unlikeness of the first flower.

One year I sowed some choice imported pansy seed of assorted varieties. They were all carefully marked, and their first bloom watched for most eagerly. Unhappily they had been planted that year near the roots of a tree that sapped their growth, while it also shut out the sunshine. As one after another the feeble flowers appeared, they proved all alike—the old common sort. I waited till all had bloomed,—tricolors all of them, instead of the variety of twelve which I had planted. Suspecting the cause, I had them all transplanted to a rich soil and open sunshine, and arrested all further bloom until autumn by nipping the buds. Then at last they were true to their type. There was the creamy white, the golden yellow, the heavenly blue, the deep

velvety purple with its crimped border, and other tints and shades which can not be described, but which once seen can never be forgotten.

I foresee some wonderful developments in very commonplace lives, when once the Chief Gardener transplants us from this poor soil, and the sapped and shaded spaces of earth, to the Heavenly Paradise. How will souls that here show little of beauty, shine out there, each in its own loveliness.

And here I may mention an exactly opposite instance in which it was riches and not poverty that proved the hindrance. One winter a friend gave me some choice gladiolus bulbs, which I planted with special care, enriching them to the utmost. What was my chagrin to find as the tall spikes began to open, that I had only the almost worthless red and yellow sorts. I confided my trouble to the florist to whose skill and learning I owe so much—a former gardener of the then King of Prussia—and he readily explained the failure—They had reverted.

A stranger watching me at my work might wonder at my partiality, why in my little pleasure-ground, I so heavily enrich the edging of the central bed for pansies, and as carefully

allow no such soil to touch the outer circle bordered with gladiolus. Nothing in all my gardening has surprised me like this, the intimate knowledge needed of the character and habits of each plant. If any of you care to peep under the benches of my little green-house, which is however only the work-room and the nursery of my garden, you will see what I have provided for their special requirements. That box of cherished soot is for my roses; that old lime rubbish for my cacti; and so on through sands, and peats, and composts that would bewilder the uninitiated. Nor is this all. To one plant I must give sunshine, to another shade; one requires moisture, another dryness. With the same care for all, I may not deal alike with all. And rejoice, O my soul, in that minute and intimate knowledge of thyself, thy needs, thy dangers, that constrains thy Lord not to deal with thee as with any other;—now to give thee more, and then to give thee far less. He has His plans, as thou hast thine. What if He even holds back all through the summer-time of life—as thou wilt do—some of His plants from flowering, that they may be the more ready for some day of days. Never question the wisdom of His will;

only watch lest in any thing small or great thou should frustrate the grace of God.

The seed first—but what next? What shall be the preparation for all this beauty and glory? How shall the tiny life be nursed? What artistic appliances shall be sought? Shall we choose the choice china for its cradle, and bring it nourishment as dainty as a babe's? The very thought provokes a smile of contempt. It cares not how humbly it is reared; and the flowers that are to grace the gardens of a king ask for their babyhood no more than if a peasant reared them. Nay, rather, coarse and common surroundings suit them best. There shall come a time indeed for the alabaster vase or the clear crystal to hold them; but now—well the shallow box of rudely jointed pine—yes, let the whole of the most unpoetical truth be told—the half of an old soap-box is by general consent their best abode. What wonder then if God stoops to sow *His* precious seed in hovels of wood and straw, and huts of peat; yes, and sometimes keeps them there till they have bloomed, when He gathers them for His Palace.

But what of the soil? *Soil is every thing*, said the friendly florist to me as he saw my need of

such knowledge. Yet all important as it is, the sources of it are most lowly. Worn out and otherwise wasted things—faded, fallen leaves, that mournful mound of death that rose so high last autumn when the sharp sudden frost struck down in one night the glory of my cannas and caladiums that were matching the stature of Goliath,—buried all of them out of my sight upon the morrow: scattered over these, the ashes from my funeral pile of autumn prunings; and finally grosser gleanings from the pasture, where the kine gathered and lowed at night. Down into such rude details must the skilful gardener descend, and the daintiest lady in the land can find no wiser way.

Out of disorder, out of death, out of repulsiveness, out of ruin, is gathered the choice food of a new fair life that is to be. And one who sits sowing seed in such a soil, mindful of its elements, can but start and ask, does God plant His seed thus? Does that grow all the better when it falls into a heart where disappointment and death have done their work? Can the dead leaves of our once beautiful things, minister even through dying to something still brighter? Can the chastening that lopped our too luxuriant

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growth, and turned many a promise into ashes, can that give precisely the precious element without which our flower, that is to be, would miss somewhat of health and brilliancy?

And now must follow the days of patient waiting; nor of waiting only, but of unwearied watching. It is no common care that such seeds demand. As an amateur, following as faithfully as I could, the best oral and written instructions, I saved not one seed in a hundred. Package after package of the more delicate sorts failed utterly. I had quite underrated the skill required. The slightest chill, a sunshine only a little too strong, a very trifling excess of dryness or moisture, and the only reward of all my previous care was a dearly bought experience. The "damping off" process is a sad one to witness. It is not only in my garden that I have seen it;—the withering sunshine of this world has laid waste whole fields sown for the Master.

Nothing is more common among the unskilful, than complaints against the seed. Repeated failures end in disgust, and therefore some of the most beautiful flowers are very rare; few being prepared to set themselves humbly and perseveringly to learn. Consequently such flowers,

even when once introduced into a neighborhood, soon die out—precisely as so many Christian gifts and graces have died out or become exceedingly rare. We talk indeed very presumptuously, and without the least authority from Holy Scripture, about their withdrawal. We are ready to lay the blame anywhere, to give any account of the matter, rather than suspect, search, and stir up ourselves. How much of Christian activity bent narrowly upon the one object of seeing the seed spring up quickly, has failed of all final results, because the seed sowing was followed by so little nurture. What might we not hope for if, as carefully as a florist watches his flowers, each pastor and teacher watched for the souls for which they must give an account. What a text for such to study,—“We are laborers together with God: ye are God’s husbandry.” Above all, when the skill is secured, should steadiness be added. I never saw a fitful nature succeed in a flower garden.

My little seedlings must be closely sheltered. Having sown them, over each box I place, for a time, a lid of glass, and following no rigid rule, the quick eye discerns whether it be air or water, whether it be shade or sunshine, that is needed.

*“Such care over such little things!”* I have often read that comment in the eyes of an unappreciative spectator; but I think I never heard or saw it from July to October. It belongs to the struggles of March and April, and the day of small things, which only the wisest learn not to despise.

A few days of waiting, and lo! my seeds are springing up. After all, how disproportioned my little care to such a marvel. I cast my seed into the ground and went the common round—to rise by day and sleep by night—and now, “it springeth up and groweth,” I “know not how.” I sit speechless, almost thoughtless, before this secret of life; and where science stands confounded I bow my head and worship.

Some of these seedlings are not only tiny, but, as the children say, “tiny.” Yet small as they are, the time hastens when their individuality must be recognized. The true leaves now appear, and then follows that delightful task of “pricking out,” in which each little plant is held lovingly in one hand, while the other prepares the place for its roots and then carefully covers them, and “firms” them.

And now with what care must the weeds be

watched. How close they contrive to grow to the very roots of the plants. What skill is sometimes needed to hold firm the flower while drawing away the weed. And how rapidly weeds always grow! I sometimes wonder *why*. It surely is not their advantage as natives of the soil, for the majority of them are as truly exotic as our flowers. But in my seed boxes I can almost tell a weed from its tallness alone. Was it that God saw fit to set such a type in nature of the rankness of evil in the moral world? I can but think so.

And now in nursing my frail charge, I have one care above all others, to secure the growth of roots. I do not care to see my seedlings shoot up tall and slender. Holding them back from this by every known device, I encourage a deeper growth. Some varieties are placed for this purpose in small earthen pots, that the sun striking upon their sides may give them genial warmth, and so fill them with balls of vigorous roots.

In my inexperienced days I said, "Surely the more soil and the larger pot, the better." "No," said the florist, "give them no more than they can use; the rest simply sours." So I find it;

and only when they have thus appropriated all their nourishment do I give them more. And as often as I thus transfer them, do I ponder those words of wisdom—"I have yet many things to say unto you, but ye can not bear them now." "And with many such parables spake He the word unto them, as they were able to hear it." Healthy growth, however slow, is my own aim; and very sure I am that hot-house forcing is not the way of our far-seeing, patient Lord.

But now at last, surely my little plants are ready to be set out, and moreover the garden beds are so bare, and the sunshine is so genial.

Ah ! but take heed of those sudden surprises of late untimely frosts, and inure the tender growth slowly to the chilly nights. Let it learn by degrees what it is to have the rude winds beat against it all the day, and the fiery sun scorch it till its freshness fails. Keep back—keep back—for the sake of growth; that is the paradox in man's garden and in the Lord's. The Bible is full of it: Moses must add to the forty years of highest human culture, another special forty of seclusion at the back side of the desert, but near the Lord, in order that he may do the

actual work of only forty years more. So St. Paul must be *set back*, so to speak, in Arabia, for three years, before his most powerful preaching, and spend three years more in prisons and perils of the sea, before we can have his choicest epistles. How different the spirit of this age, demanding as it does, immediate and striking success! How restless one is apt to become when it is delayed!

The first year of my flower garden, after the planting of my geranium bed, I noticed a strange lack of growth; and as weeks even passed with scarcely a new leaf, while a bed in a neighboring garden grew rapidly, I hastened to my unfailing adviser, the florist.—“What are my geraniums about? they do not grow at all.” With a half-amused look he answered, “They are doing the *best* thing they can do,—*they are making roots*. You will see by and by.” And I did indeed see.

And would that I might pass on that answer to every Christian educator and trainer of souls—“*Making roots!*” Do you see to it that souls *do that?*—that the deep underlying principles, the healthy impulses and receptivities, and the cogent constraints of conscience, are secured

first of all? Do you look after the roots of faith before the works that will follow? Do you watch, as precious beyond all price, the forming of those little tender working roots of love, through which all future enriching must come? Do you seek to *multiply* roots? For only thus can one find deliverance from that short-lived devotedness and intermittent interest in good works that are so prevalent.

I have flowers among these seedlings that I shall not allow to come into bloom until autumn. Every little flower-bud will be nipped at once, that the stalk may gather strength and put forth at length the perfection of beauty. And ought not those who are so often discouraged at the withheld opportunities of life, who are conscious of energies that God only could give, and know that His gifts are always His calls to service—ought not such to trust the Hand that again and again forbids them to come forth. Their time is not yet. Another and yet another little branch, and each one made stronger daily, this is the present vocation. Our blessed Lord Himself is the one Great Example even in this. Thirty years of waiting, saying to their end, “My time is not yet come,”

—but then three years that held the blessedness  
of thousands!

But the time of seed sowing passes quickly. Ere it be gone let me consider closely, "Have I sown the seed of all that I purpose to have?" For as is the seed sowing, such must be the summer glory and the autumn fruition. Think and think yet again; and then turn to ask more earnestly, "Have I forgotten any little seed of truth and righteousness? Have I forecast the future—now in this life that is the seed-time of eternal life? "For whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap. . . . He that soweth to the Spirit shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting."



III.

**“Consider the Lilies.”**



### III.

#### **"Consider the Lilies."**

"We're made so that we love  
First when we see them painted, things we have passed  
Perhaps a hundred times nor cared to see;  
And so they are better painted—better to us,  
Which is the same thing. Art was given for that—  
God uses us to help each other so,  
Lending our minds out."

ROBERT BROWNING.

I have received a beautiful gift to-day. Yesterday in passing my lily bed I noticed the rapidly swelling buds and said to myself, In a week I shall have lilies. Last night the rain fell in warm, soft showers, and with the sunrise the birds were all astir, with music that seemed more delicious than ever—singing as they only can sing who are uplifted for the time by the throb and thrill of a great thanksgiving in the heart. So I arose also. My first

step was enough. The lilies!—they too had hastened forth. There stood in line the snowy Easter lilies telling over again in their full prime the same glorious evangel they had been summoned to symbolize those months ago.

O pure white lips!—how is it that ye seem more full of conscious life than any other flower? What is it in these waxen almost fleshlike petals that has a human touch? Was there ever gold like this in the coronets ye wear half hidden in your bending blossoms, as not caring to show all your wealth save to those who love you? Art never yet brought together such coloring in such perfect harmony.

But another surprise awaits me. My Palestine lily has also bloomed. Five scarlet bells are here this morning. What intensity of color, yet what solidity!—there is not the slightest paling of it to the very tip of the firmly recurved petals. It is royalty itself that is blooming here side by side with purity. And O how marvellously there come to me in this sweet morning air—as from the lips of One unseen, yet ever seen—the words I know He uttered once, “Consider the lilies how they grow: they toil not, they spin not; and yet I say unto you

that Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these."

I stand transfixed. The message is for me, this very hour. My Saviour also loved the flowers. *He* pondered, as like unto us in all things, the lessons which His own creative skill had committed to them, when by Him the worlds were made. He taught *us* to ponder them. And as I look and listen, the well-known words are taken up into a music I have so loved to listen to—would that she whose voice and skilful touch along the keys gave them such rich expression, were here now to sing it over them,—“And yet I say unto you, I say unto you that even Solomon in all his glory, was not arrayed like one of these.” Again and again I hear the cadence of that soft refrain, “was not arrayed—was not arrayed—was not arrayed—like one of these—like one of these—like one of these.”

So I am looking upon a glory which man can never match—the glory of color and the grace of form, which the Lord of all converted to high spiritual service. And now my heart takes up the song that shall one day be sung in the new Paradise of our God—“Thou hast created all

things, and for Thy pleasure they are, and were created."

The loveliness that is the reflection of His love who made them, is the first thing to see. And yet it was not this alone that the Lord Jesus bade His disciples consider. He used this beauty to comfort heavy hearts. He was speaking to the poor. Why take ye thought for raiment? Behold what God hath wrought for flowers. They have no strength to toil. They have no skill to spin. God does it all. He surely taketh thought then for the garments of His own; and whether with soft silken folds, or scantiest serge, He will provide what He sees fitting.

And doing this for the body, will He not much more clothe our spirits? The fine linen in which the Bride is to be made ready—the righteousness which we are to put on, even till we fully put on Christ, and stand arrayed in the lovely lineaments of His heavenly beauty—how can we toil over this? In what wondrous loom shall raiment like this be spun?

O careful, anxious, troubled soul, if thou art indeed a new creature in Christ Jesus, how can He fail to clothe thee in garments of glory? And so is not the sweet and simple lesson which our

Lord gave over the lilies, even more applicable to our inner than our outer life? Any dogma which relegates to man the formation of his own Christian character, is most radically defective. It is *His* work, *His* care—for is it not written of the Bride, “To her was granted that she should be arrayed in fine linen clean and white.” Only from His creative spirit can possibly come the beauty that shall make Him say hereafter, “Thou art all fair, my Love; there is no spot in thee!”

And yet sometimes the teaching of Holy Scripture upon this subject seems contradictory. Now righteousness is the work of the Spirit, and through faith; and now it is through watchfulness and obedience and constant striving; and yet again it is through patience in much suffering that we are to be made perfect and entire, wanting nothing. But there is no real contradiction in all these.

For let me consider further what has been done for these lilies by human care. How closely I watched the preparation of that bed, made so deep and filled with the richest mould. How often have I loosened the soil around them, and refreshed them when the showers of heaven failed. How carefully each winter I spread the fallen

leaves for their blanket, and watched that no careless foot of man or beast trod on their pushing shoots in spring. In short, how manifold the caressing cares I have given them. And without all of these they would not be what I behold them now.

And yet none of all these things made one of them a lily. They were that from the first. God gave to the small seed and to the deep hidden bulb, the wonderful heirship of this primal beauty; and then He caused His sun and air and rain to work through its vital forces, and so to take up that brown earth and refine it, and assimilate it, that the flower which crowns their silent labor, is whiter than snow.

As truly as the seed must follow on until it has fulfilled the entire type of its parentage, so we, that are born of God, must grow on and on with ever more of His image, till we stand at last "fulfilled in Christ." And all the time His Holy Spirit will keep silently ministering to us as the air, and as the soft showers, and all the while the Sun of righteousness will transmute all earthly things to pure and heavenly ones, till finally the Lord will come into His garden, and gather His lilies.

Yet, meanwhile, we as workers together with Him are required to remove the hindrances, and to give all earnest and constant heed to this spiritual culture, waiting in patience for such an end as this. How well I remember as a little child, taking from one species of lily some of the little black bulblets that had grown in the axils of the leaves, and planting them. How perplexed I was over the unlikeness of the first year's growth, and even of the subsequent ones. Years are almost decades to a child; and the five years during which I waited for their bloom, seemed the utmost reach of patience. Yet it had at last its great reward.

But this morning, even in the enjoyment of this burst of beauty, I must also needs acknowledge failure. A little neglect here and there has somewhat marred the effect of the whole, and had I given in the early spring, a little more enriching, my lilies had been still more queenly. So with secret resolve, I hope for still better things in the future.

By the way, how much of our success depends upon a high standard! How many wretched gardens and forlorn plants can be seen everywhere, simply because their possessors do not know their

possibilities. It were well to know our shortcoming even at the cost of much humbling.

A few years since, in this same bed, my first Japan lilies bloomed. One tall stem bore two magnificent golden-banded flowers, by far the finest I had ever seen. I was that very morning, setting out on a journey to my twin brothers, and this seemed a peculiarly fitting offering for them. A detention on the way took me to the house of a dear friend, who I knew would fully appreciate them. The whole household was summoned, and were in ecstasies of admiration, when last of all entered the son who had just returned from Japan, who sat down very coolly to tell me how often he had seen such lilies growing by the side of a moat at Yokohama, and fully twice the size of mine! Mine, of course, dwindled accordingly in all our admiring eyes. Had I not heard that, I should have been supremely satisfied; but having heard it, mine have grown finer every succeeding year. I know the standard now.

So too with my gladiolus: I had been content with small spikes a few feet in height; but when in St. Augustine, in a garden that for luxuriance I never saw surpassed, my astonished eyes beheld their superb heads towering high above mine, I

came home with a new ideal. It is hopeless in this climate to rival the stature of those, but I have often since had them somewhat exceed my own height.

And precisely in this, it seems to me, lies the blessing of Christian example. Comparing our stunted graces among ourselves, or often with what we our own selves have been in the past, we have little thought of that which we are called to be. Suddenly God sets before us a living man or woman, "full orb'd in love" as Bushnell says, or perfect in patience, or simple and sweet as only the truly great *can* be; and we learn through these, the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ.

So of old the zeal of the Church at Corinth provoked very many. I doubt if any other human influence be half so stimulating to our growth as the pattern of holy character. Indeed it is not wholly human; for it is also the most immediate and powerful ministry of the Holy Spirit, working through one healthy member upon all others in the same body. Even when such examples are only embalmed in their memoirs, a vitalizing power still lingers, as in Elisha's bones, and we rise up to follow them, as they followed Christ.

But to go back to a point already spoken of. Much of our care while directly causative of no growth whatever, may yet, in removing hindrances, foster it indirectly in the most powerful manner. Such a lesson, also, I have learned from my lily bed.

These Easter lily bulbs were the gift of a dear friend. I planted them in two rows, seventeen in all, to form a background for the other varieties. Two years after I saw one in the row nearest the fence, falling short. I gave it a little extra care, dug about it, and enriched it a little more. Still it pined. At last its leaves grew sallow, and then they fell off altogether. It was indeed time to investigate the cause. So I dug carefully down, searching for grubs, for mole tracks, for all thought of enemies. None of these were there. At last I found the bulb, sound but shrunken, held fast captive in the meshes of another life. A wild clematis had sprung up at an adjacent post, and I had allowed it to remain, that it might trail its dark green leaves, and wealth of bloom along the somewhat unsightly fence. But, though not shading the lily, or apparently crowding it above, the roots below had crept along instinctively to the richer soil around it, and at last encircled the bulb.

There were the multitudinous golden fibres, each only a slender thread, but counting as they must have done by thousands, and all of them closing round and round the struggling bulb, until at last it was choked.

I never shall forget my thought as I held that little rescued bulb in my hands. It seemed almost to grow into a human heart that had come to me for help, and asked me why it could not have the life of joy and blessed service that so many others have. And I made the sad answer that my Saviour did:—"The lust of other things has entered in and choked the Word." Yet still the poor withered heart pleaded, "But I know of no wrong thing in my life: I have no unchristian pursuit or pleasure." True, but *other* things, Jesus said; not necessarily evil things. Among these other things may be good things even, unduly cherished. My clematis was not a weed—not even when it did this deadly work of sapping all sustenance from my lily. It was only a good thing out of place. It was only a good thing grown wanton, and by its rampant growth stopping all growth in *a far better thing*. I could not hesitate a moment to tear it from its place.

Choose—and choose the best. Give room, give space. These are the lessons I am ever learning from my garden. Again and again I am admonished, Do not crowd, do not crowd. I am the more bound to listen to this, that the temptations to the contrary are very constant. There are so many pretty things to provide a place for, and the bare spots are so unsightly. But only by permitting this for a season can the eye be finally satisfied. Yes, it is all wrong—these over-crowded lives of ours—this attempt to get every thing that is good in science, art, society, compressed into the space of threescore years and ten. And so we have that great trouble out of our very joys, called “social pressure.” How many sink under its relentless exactions. In how many ways do our coveted conveniences become our cares, and our pleasures involve sore pains. Man is all the time finding out many inventions to lighten the burden of life, while all the time it is steadily growing heavier. Some-what of this is probably inevitable, and designed to teach us how finite are our powers. Time was when we could contrive to compass the interests of a continent; but now a whole world must be grasped. So far as this is remediable

our only hope lies in wise choosing. In the struggle for supremacy the coarser elements stand always ready to encroach upon the finer, the earthly upon the heavenly. One has need in these days to act upon Luther's plan; and as our duties grow confused and clamorous, to bring them to peace and order through added hours of prayer.

But while I am thinking thus, my lilies are looking silently upon me, and feeding me each moment with their loveliness. How fitted they are to take a high symbolic place. Nor need we be surprised that even the heathen should recognize this symbolism of nature, turning often enough indeed the truth of God into a lie, and yet even then holding, as has been well said, "lies that cry after the truth." In Japan and other eastern countries the lily is the symbol of human purity. The lily of the Old Testament was also, as its very name—"the white"—implies, a symbol of purity; but always of a purity divine, or at least divinely given.

As the palm among trees, and the pomegranite among fruits, so stood the lily in its peculiar beauty and significance among the flowers. We might be tempted to underrate the impor-

tance of its symbolism from the fact that there is but one solitary mention of it in Sacred Art (1 Kings vii.). But we shall recognize the importance of this one, when we consider that the symbol was *constantly* before the eyes of every temple worshipper—for them, not to be read about once, but seen daily. A lily was the crown and completion of each of the two pillars that adorned the porch of the temple—standing there not as supports, but as beautiful columns. “Upon the top of the pillars was lily work; so was the work of the pillars finished.” These pillars had no counterpart in the tabernacle, and therefore must represent something peculiar to the kingdom. In the temple, as in the tabernacle, the work and offices of both Christ and the Holy Spirit are everywhere shadowed forth. If we ask then, what will be the great characteristic of the coming kingdom of our Lord, we are answered again and again, that it will be first His visible appearing in power and great glory; and also this, that “when Christ shall appear, then shall we also appear with Him in glory.” Christ and His Church will then stand side by side in the eyes of an admiring universe. These pillars therefore would

seem to set forth the symmetry and adorning of holy character, as expressed first in the life of our Lord, and repeated next in that of His Church. How subtly suggestive of this are these often recurring expressions, "the one," "the other;"—"so did He for the other." There was but one model. They were cast in one mould. One was finished first, and in that the skill of the artist had its complete triumph. The other was a most faithful copy; even as God has "predestinated us to be conformed to the image of His Son."

A lesson of exceeding beauty is given us in these pillars. He that is blind to it must needs be blind, but that is no reason why those that see should shut their eyes to it. The strength and lofty stature first impress us. Then upon the capitals is the net-work of seven-wreathed chains, to mark the intertwining in a perfect harmony of all fair Christian graces; like the seven virtues that St. Peter would have us add to our faith. The abundant fruitfulness is plainly indicated in the double rows of pomegranites that bordered the capitals as with close-set beading. Then last of all we see this open lily cup, as though the whole pillar were re-

garded as a vast vase to hold up its beauty to the eye of heaven. What have we here but the beatitude, “Blessed are the *pure in heart*; for they shall see God.”

That our whole soul should ever be open to His eye, to drink in His light, His air, His dew, and so give back to Him the fragrance of a pure heart and life,—for this He made us, and placed us where we might worship Him in spirit and in truth. That which we are in the sight of God is the supreme thing—far beyond all work, all fruitfulness, greatly as these are to His glory. And even as our spirits are fed by the vision of all pure, sweet things, so He deigns to feed upon that which He Himself creates in us; and even for His sake should we offer our fervent prayer—

“I ask this gift of Thee,  
A life all lily fair,  
And fragrant as the place  
Where seraphs are.”

And now I must gather my lilies. Most cruel would it be to snatch them from this sweet sisterhood of buds, were it not that the sultry sun would ere long smite them; and so that their brief life of beauty may be a little length-

ened, and that others may enjoy them, I must carry them within.

But what shall I place with them, where their stems stand so stately in this tall vase? A little more of green is needed, and their own leaves, fitting and beautiful as they are, are not available for this; yet they give the hint of a true accord. None but grass shaped leaves will answer; and these must somewhat correspond in size. So I pass by the delicate grasses I am rearing, where the exquisitely graceful culms are bursting into airy bloom, as too small, too ethereal—and I go on to the margin of the meadow, and there among the wild grasses that spring up as very weeds, I find my treasures. Tall bending blades of richest deepest green, soft as velvet, bearing aloft their paler plumes,—those are perfect in their adaptation. The lilies and the grass of the field, clothed both of them by God—how fittingly they stand together, even as He has linked them in His Word.

What a delight to group them thus! What a strange satisfaction it gives to enter ever so little into sympathy with the plans of the Creator—to carry out, so to speak, His preferences!

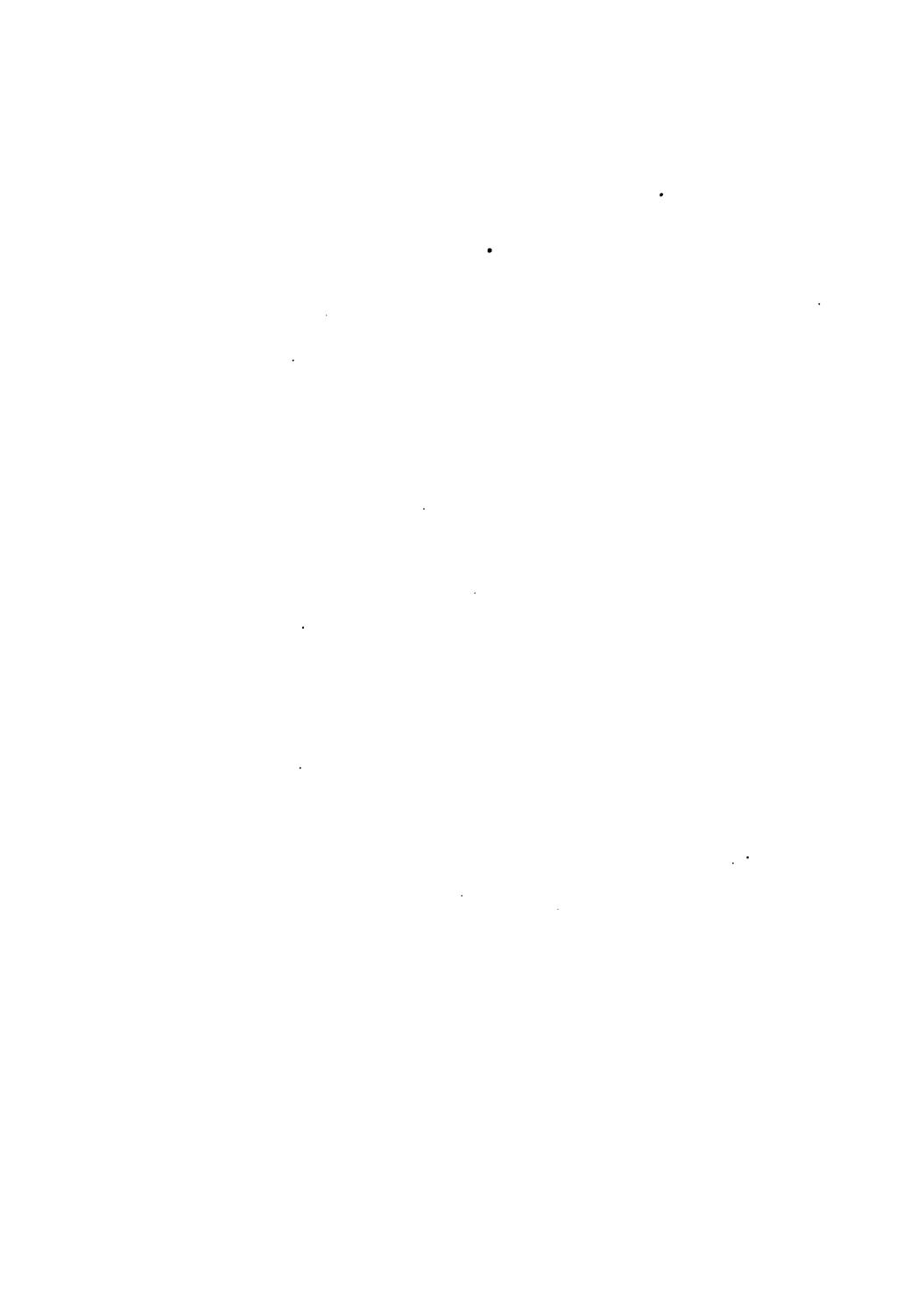
O if souls that are conscious of some creative

skill which they suffer to lie unused on earth, for the sake of service for the King, could but know how readily, and with what small expenditure of time, many of an artist's instincts might be gratified, what refreshment would be theirs! And if they who sit in humble homes, half covetous of some rare work of art which only wealth can command, could but see what culture really lies within their reach, what great contentment would be theirs!

My study rivals royalty to-day. Whatever I may read of, or think of, this day, in the whole range of beauty, I can still answer with a smile, —And yet it is not “like one of these.” There are treasures of art here that were the outcome of no common gifts, some of them wrought for love’s sake, and so ever doubly blessing me with their presence; since ever above that which the skilled hand made so fair, hover the beaming eyes of living and loving human faces. Among them is one treasure modelled by a princess’ hand; but they all alike make their obeisance to-day, in the presence of a gift from the King Himself who, giving many good gifts for our common service, gave this as a token of love and remembrance.

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And now one final lesson sinks into my soul, as I glance not at the lilies only, but at the grass of the field that is not abashed by all their splendor. The choice thing, and the common thing—one from the Orient, and the other lifted up as “the beggar from the dunghill” to be “set among princes”—truly “the rich and the poor” here “meet together,” and “the Lord is the Maker of them all.” They need each other. In this union each finds something to complete its own charms. Even so when the lilies of His garden are gathered, and carried by the Master to His mansions above, then will He delight to place together the prince and the peasant—one at length in the possession of the true riches, and the learned and unlearned—one henceforth in the wisdom that is from above. Passing wonderful, and passing fair, will be the grouping of spirits in the Palace of the King.



IV.

Weeds.



## IV.

### Weeds.

“To win the secret of a weed’s plain heart,  
Reveals some clue to spiritual things.”

LOWELL.

“O mickle is the powerful grace that lies  
In herbs, plants, stones, and their true qualities;  
For nought so vile that on the earth doth live,  
But to the earth some special good doth give;  
Nor aught so good, but, strained from that fair use,  
Revols from true birth, stumbling on abuse.”

ROMEO AND JULIET.

A question has been exercising my mind this morning—Had Eve any weeds among her flowers? On the whole, I think *not*; and in confirmation of this I remember that Milton significantly omits this chief care of modern gardens from that which he portrays. He does indeed, with his fine perception of the fitting, assign to our first parents a work that tasked all their energies. Adam was not to lounge, nor Eve to

dawdle; and it only indicates the high happiness of full employ, when he describes our busy mother as almost overpressed by care.

“What we by day  
Lop overgrown, or prune, or prop, or bind,  
One night or two with wanton growth derides,  
Tending to wild.”

Well, if that were all *I* had to do, I should never, I think, get upon the verge of complaint. Weeds are the chief of my work. Indeed I sometimes think they have a peculiar tendency to grow in my garden; but I have heard others occasionally make the same remark.

I have already spoken of the weeds that sprung up among the grass; but one special struggle in that line has a small history of its own—as that of a valiant among weeds.

When I first saw this spot, there was growing beneath the oak trees upon the hill-side, a large compact clump of elder. This was cut down with the briars and burned in our bonfire. In preparing the soil for grass not only was this spot ploughed up, but in the change of level was much more deeply covered; so that I little thought of seeing the elders again. Greatly to

my surprise they were soon up, feet in height. They appeared even to relish their own ashes, and threw under all the persecutions I could devise. "Very hard to get rid of," said an old farmer. "You will have to dig up the whole spot again; there is no other way. Not a single root must be left in the ground." So to work he went with a strong spade; but on reaching the difficulty, not an inch could he strike the spade into those tough and crowded roots. "A pick-axe will do it," suggested another workman, "and it stands to reason that if you take that, and go through them inch by inch, there'll soon be an end of them." "Capital," I answered,— "the very thing to be done." And so having watched the success of the first few strokes, I withdrew. But I was soon summoned from my study. The workman was in great perplexity. He could not help hitting and hacking the huge roots of the oaks. In fact the two had often become so twisted together as to be inseparable, and in not a few cases indistinguishable. Of course the pick-axe process was stopped, and all advice was now exhausted.

As I stood there, fairly facing the difficulty, foiled and ignorant, I became aware that it was

another deeper question that I was in reality pondering. Had I always been able to discern between the good and the evil, in the deep, and ever deeper working of the heart? Could I say decisively which were holy, and which were unholy? Had I been able at all to judge the thoughts and intents of those around me? And in the secret scrutiny of the counsels of my own heart, in my very intentness to root out the wrong, might I not possibly, all unaware, be marring the growth of some of the noblest powers that God my Maker had planted in my being? And had I not known too, even when conscience gave her unhesitating verdict, that then the very efforts to subdue an evil, seemed only to provoke its utmost vigor?

Of course it was not long before another clump of elder reared its defiant head. It now occurred to me, that under all these difficulties, the only practicable plan was this: as soon as a shoot was up high enough to betray its real nature, and with strength enough to furnish a good grip to the hand, it should be seized fast, and a sharp knife thrust far down by its side, cutting it off as much below the surface as possible. I said to myself, I know that it is a law of all such

life, that it can only be maintained finally by growth in the air and light. *I can worry them to death.*

No sentinel at his post, ever watched more closely for an enemy, than did I. It was a huge satisfaction to take this almost desperate case into my own hands, and to run my keen blade far down, till I could bring up inches of the white root stalk. Of course the next shoot had to start much lower down, and from a somewhat exhausted root. They were slower and slower in reappearing, and more and more feeble, though still they held out with a perseverance worthy of a better cause. But I made no truce with them. Instant execution was the unvarying sentence. Now, I suppose they are quite exterminated; none at least, have appeared for the last two years. After discovering for myself this slow but successful process, I had the pleasure of reading it all in the agricultural column of my newspaper. The process was styled, "suffocation."

"Now give us the moral of all this in full," some one demands. Stay, good friend, fond as I am of tracing these deeper meanings, believing devoutly with my well-revered Jeremy Taylor

that, "all things are full of such resemblances," cut and dried moralizing is not at all to my taste. Even as a child, it seemed to me that they half spoiled the beautiful fables and allegories that I read. Why could I not have the delight of seeing what it meant myself. There is a certain voluminous history upon my shelves, which, though sometimes referred to, is never really read, for the monotony of the incessant application of the facts, which seems always to say, "Alas, you are so dull, this would never once enter into your own thought." It spoils even the sport of a child, to have an enigma answered in the same breath in which it was given.

I like, however, that pleasant social game of "Throwing Light." And truly it is something not unlike that which I am trying to do; giving merely a hint here and there, of the manifold lessons to be drawn. And besides, in many instances, the shadow, that can never be seen like the light, is the very charm that allures our eye. Now and then also, "*the curtain is the picture,*" and for those who can not see that, there is nothing to be seen.

Still I may as well confess to having often

queried what the elders *most* resembled. I think it must be self-will, whereof truly the root is so tough, and the struggle with it so long. How often too I have noticed, that the few who hastily claimed its utter subjection, or annihilation, were not slow in giving some special proof of its vitality. Like the elder too, it thrives wonderfully upon its own supposed death. That it should find its supreme delight, in trying to subjugate the will of others, has, I fear, no type in nature.

As for the weeds that spring up among my grass and shrubbery, they give me a fair opportunity of testing the value of Cowper's advice to one of his fair lady friends, who was to be kept from growing corpulent, by "*now and then*" pulling a weed in the garden. Now and then, indeed! But I dare say that was a euphemism. At any rate in my daily task, with much bending of back, and bracing of knees, and far reaching of hands, and hard pulling of arms, I have followed out to its literal results, a much older recipe than Cowper's (given in the third chapter of Genesis, the nineteenth verse), prescribed when man left Eden, and had henceforth thorns and briers and weeds. If this command, which was not a curse, but a part of God's kind remedy for a curse, were only

more widely obeyed, how many much sorer things we might be spared.

What need is there to invent such varieties of artificial exercise, when here is one all ready to our hands, which gives healthful play to all the bodily powers, under that prime condition of intensely interesting the mind. Is it to be refused as an old wives' fable, that the very contact with the earth is healthful? Those who garden in gloves are not competent to decide this; but if a superstition, it is a very harmless one at least. How often would I like to prescribe this remedy to pale and listless young girls, who are not blessed with so wise a family physician, as the good old man who saved my life as a child, by a prescription of three words in plain English,— “A flower garden.” So I took my iron through flower stems instead of glass tubes, and found the blue blossoms of the gentian vastly better than its brown, bitter roots.

Can you wonder then, that I have sometimes pictured to myself a garden sanitarium, where weary brain workers, and especially clergymen threatened with a break down of health, might resort? I would have them marched forth every morning, a little before sunrise, armed with all

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manner of peaceful weapons. How delightful to watch the result! to see the vigorous wielding of the "Excelsior weeding hook," issue in the more powerful grappling with great moral evils; and the hand well exercised with a digging fork, turn to all the more masterly pose of the pen. The more stately and dignified, who like not to stoop, might push the scuffle-hoe along the walks. The orator should sustain the energies of gesture, by swinging a scythe; while some more gentle spirits might trundle the lawn-mower and draw the spring-rake. Some warlike spirits might possibly learn that neither a literal nor metaphorical garden, is any proper place for swords and spears; and without waiting for the millennium to turn theirs into ploughshares and pruning-hooks, would find the weapons of their warfare all the more mighty.

However, to go back to my weeds, I do not find my chief trouble with the large or clearly defined weeds of the loose soil. I am most discomfited by the little straggling leaves here and there in the green sward, on the hill-side, where I do not aim to keep it closely shaven. Some of them are so weak as not to give a stem for leverage. The yarrow with its crimps and curls looks

even pretty for a time; till you become aware of its spreading far and wide, and growing coarse withal. The plantain too—well who knows but there may be a grain of truth in the old tradition that spares it for the sake of the toads, those busy welcome helpers of your toil, the weeders of the insect world; at any rate the birds will delight to peck its seeds; but at last the “muchness” of it becomes the question.

And then the chickweed that begs permission to hide itself under your tall caladiums, and creep modestly under the eaves of the cottage—it seems too small to make an enemy of;—and will not your little friends near by need some of it for their canary-birds?

And then the sorrel;—why you have to deal with it almost leaf by leaf. However, I have learned at last a better way for that. I discovered that its acid shoots were the natural and necessary expression of a sour soil, and that in this case it did not suffice to battle with the roots. So I had the ashes of my wood fire carefully sifted over every spot where it grew, and the sorrel has ceased to spring up, giving place to the sweet grass.

One can not help moralizing a little over said

sorrel. It is so exactly like a sour temper—or rather the sour looks and sharp words that betray their soil, and that head up finally in such a dreary discontent with all men, and all things.

Who are the freest from this? They who have suffered, and have had their sorrow sanctified. You may be almost confident that those who in mature life are the habitually cheerful and even buoyant, are they who have known most of trial, or suffered most of wrong. They have been sweetened as with ashes! Such rare sweetness of spirit have I sometimes seen among the former slaves of this land, as well as among the poorest peasantry of other shores. I have seen it too where few knew the secret sorrow of the life.

To lose the wise use of such disappointment and trial as God permits in our lives, is one of the greatest of all possible losses. Those dying embers and grey ashes on your hearth-stone, where the fire that warmed and cheered you has faded away—these are no nuisance to be put far away, but a treasure that can make your life greener and brighter. The waste and despised things that are hurried out of our sight are precisely the things we need.

I think I have learned at last to utilize *every*

*thing* in my garden. Not an old bone, or husk is there, that is not to be counted as treasure instead of trash; just as I truly believe that nothing is permitted to enter our lives, that may not in some way work together for good; although every thing depends upon our trustfully accepting and wisely using it.

I may as well confess that I find a positive pleasure in the basket of weeds I secure in a morning's round. Like a miser I hoard up every leaf and stalk, and even the faded flowers from my vases, having learned the power of littles. If you wish to peep behind the curtain, you can pass along that screen of sweet-peas at the end of my garden, and outside of them behold the bank in which I keep my gold dust, making daily some deposit or other. This very day stronger arms than mine have turned it all over, scattered a few ashes through it, and shaping it somewhat comely, have covered it with fresh earth that the sun may not waste its rich juices, and garnished it finally with the grass shearings, that it may not offend the prying eye. By next spring it will be perfect mould. These flowers and shrubs hard by, had no other food for this season, and nothing could be thriftier.

A few mornings since, as I was musing on the vast difference between a flower and a weed, and the unsparing severity I used to the one, while bestowing such caresses on the other,—this aphorism suddenly took shape in my mind:—the *weeds* of this year are the *flowers* of the next! I dare say some one will object, that surely it would be better if the weed did not spring up, and if all the richness of the soil went directly to the plant: that after all, the weed can only bring back again that which it took away.

Not so fast, good friend. The weed is not made wholly out of earth. It draws still more largely its stores from air and water. Each plant is a chemist, elaborating the elements to its own liking and forming new compounds; so that many a farmer enriches his land by ploughing in a harvest of clover, the soil thus doubling its fertility. Of course there is a great difference among plants or weeds, some being more skilful chemists than others. I was searching a chemical work but lately, for quite another purpose, when my eye fell upon this statement: “Different plants, and even different parts of the same plant, yield ashes of a very different composition. Thus the ashes from one ton of

pine wood gives of pure potash 0.90 lbs.; beach, 2.90 lbs.; oak, 3.6 lbs.; common wheat straw, 7.80 lbs.; dry straw of wheat before earing, 34 lbs.; bean stalks, 40 lbs.; stalks of Indian corn, 35 lbs.; *thistles in full growth, 70 lbs.; wormwood, 146 lbs.*"

Two things I gathered from this—(dear patient reader, do not take alarm at the statistical look of this page)—firstly, nothing was surer to impoverish my soil than those thistles, the seeds of which rode on all the winds of autumn. Therefore the earlier pulled the better, and the surer one makes of the very tip of their long roots the better; secondly, I learned this: if they contained such choice salts, then all those thistles bristling around my lower borders, were so much booty in store for me. If left as not belonging to me, then I must of necessity take all their seeds as the reward of my indifference. Nor could I overlook all the torture to the mouths of poor horses and cows, that would follow from their being left to be mown with the grass. To the farmer whose perquisite they might have been, they were worse than valueless; and if he cared about it at all, he would thank me for the raid. Here then was a chance for a

little adventure of a most novel sort. So, early the next morning, armed with thick gauntlets and my lawn-shears, I bore down upon the foe; and seized with the very spirit of conquest, it was almost exultingly that I saw them rise like Samson's slain, "heaps upon heaps." I doubt if any morning's toil ever brought me a larger stock of vigor, to begin with, than did this extraordinary *coup d'état*.

Then I went within; and having anointed the few stray scratches with oil, I sat down to meditate in a manner most profitable to myself: but I fear the thoughts were too wide and wandering ever to be told. So I will leave each of you, dear friends, to think it out for yourselves, as I had to, as to how far we are responsible for the evils that are bristling around all our borders, and as to our wise disposition of the irrepressible thistles of life. There, is in fact, a theme large enough for a year of thought.

The only regret I experienced, was when in glancing again at my chemical table, I noticed that the *wormwood* was twice as rich in those hid treasures. I have none of that growing at all near me now. If any of you have, do not let it go to waste, but learn the happy art of caus-

ing the self-same stroke to disarm the power of evil in others, and to enrich your own existence. Out of rough and sharp things, and even most bitter things, may the garden grow ever fairer and fairer.

As in most human affairs, there come propitious times, even for weeding. Not that we are to wait idly for the best time, only that when it comes, we are then to set aside what other things we may, and do our utmost. Weeds do not yield easily in a dry soil; and after a rain is the golden time for approaching them. How easily and neatly they come up from walk, and flower bed, and lawn. You work with triple speed. Nay, better one hour then, than a whole day when all is parched. The soil is left so firm and tidy now, that the very definiteness of the work is delightful. "Oh!" I say to myself, as I follow up the soft showers, getting a grip then on many a weed that has escaped me hitherto—"oh! let me use even thus every tendering visitation of the Spirit."

Do we not all know that there come seasons in our lives, when the work of sanctification may be set further on in a day, than in weeks of the common course of things? What a ready yield-

ing up is there then of that which is seen to be evil; what righting and readjusting of the life. When such seasons come for my garden, I drop every thing but duties, and devote myself to this work. And well were it for our souls if we would thus turn aside, as God sends the favoring season, to discern and judge ourselves, and to put away from us all, from the greatest thing down to the very least, that we recognize as evil, or even unfitting for the Eye of the Lord.

Among the evil growths in my garden, there is one however, which I dare not lay a hand upon. The slightest touch of it, or even approach to it, would cause me weeks of suffering, unless an antidote were promptly applied. I watch with wonder, the laborer, for whom I send, when a sprout of it appears, as he handles it with the utmost impunity—a power which few possess. Of course there is nothing about its appearance that denotes a poison; that it is such, is simply a matter of knowledge; or, lacking that, of most painful experience.

Nothing, however, has been more helpful to me, in the solution of some of the painful problems of life. There are certain errors both in doctrine and practice, which, judging from mere

appearance, are no more harmful than others, but the least approach to which is perilous to the soul. That such has been their practical working in the lives of others, ought to satisfy us, without presumptuously proving it, by our own added experience. That a few singularly constituted souls escape unharmed, does not affect the general law.

In dealing with all such poisonous plants, and here the analogy is very plain, exactness of knowledge is of the utmost importance. To an untaught or careless eye, this poison-ivy (*Rhus Toxicodendron*) might easily pass for the Virginia creeper. I have often mistaken it for a moment, as I caught sight of a leaf or two only. One point is decisive; the creeper has five leaflets, the poison-ivy only three. But having one such certainty it is sufficient.

On the other hand, I have often witnessed great alarm over perfectly innocent plants. I once met a lady who, knowing two of the sumach family to be poisonous, had all her life resisted the temptation to gather the rich crimson leaves, which make the other species so attractive in autumn.

One other instance of needless alarm I venture

to relate. I had gone for a day's excursion with a small, but delightful company, among the hills. After our noonday repast, in the edge of a charming grove, I found the Eupatorium perfoliatum in bloom. It so chanced that one of our company was far from well; and so after descanting to her upon its well-known medicinal properties, and half playfully claiming its discovery as providential, I gathered the blossoms, and that evening prepared a simple decoction. Unhappily, before I had time to state the proper dose, my friend had heroically swallowed the whole of it! That night I was aroused from my sleep by our hostess, with the rather startling charge of having poisoned our invalid. The whole household was already astir. In a moment I joined the anxious group whom I found slow to be reassured. I had again and again to assert, that as a botanist, I *knew to a certainty*, the name of the plant; that it was impossible for me to mistake any other for it, so strongly marked were its characteristics, and that, however unpleasant the consequences, she was not dying of poison. Happily the affair ended the next morning in much merry laughter, and even the hearty approval of the physician, though that plant has since

been known to some of us, as "the providential boneset." I may as well add, however, lest some one should copy my experiment, that during that night I renounced forever the office of an amateur medical adviser, even in herbs !

But it has often since come to my help in this way. There are nice distinctions between truth and error, upon which quite as much may turn for moral health or disease. Those who have not an accurate knowledge of the often minute, but no less certain distinctions, should never tamper with their doubts, and should bow humbly to the authority of those who have the requisite skill, but who can not always make their nice criteria clear to others.

For instance I have never extended my botanical researches to fungi. Consequently unable to detect to a certainty a poisonous mushroom, they are never served upon my table, until sent for examination, one by one, to a quick-eyed Englishman, who usually rejects two or three that might have brought death into the pot. He knew himself, but not scientifically; and therefore could not teach me to know.

Often it is not the doctrine itself, but the peculiar combination in which it is held, that proves

so injurious. Combined with but a little error it may become quite another thing. Nay, further, the very proportions of truth may be so changed, as to result in grave or even deadly error. Here also Nature is close at hand with her wonderful analogies. Listen only to this passage from the Duke of Argyll's "Reign of Law."

"How delicate these relations are, and how tremendous are the issues depending on their management, may be conceived from this single fact, that *the same* elements combined in one proportion are sometimes a nutritious food or a grateful stimulant, soothing and sustaining the powers of life; whilst combined in another proportion, they may be a deadly poison, paralysing the heart, and carrying agony along every nerve and fibre of the animal frame. This is no mere theoretical possibility. It is actually the relation for example, in which two well-known substances stand to each other—Tea and Strychnia. The active principles of these two substances, 'Theine' and 'Strychnine' are identical as far as their elements are concerned, and differ from each other only in the proportions in which they are combined. Such is the power of numbers in the laboratory of nature."

The balancing of truth may be then of mighty moment. And may not the neglect of this account in part for the frequent rejection of truth which yet is most clearly to be found in the Word of God. At some period of its progress, careless hands changed its proper combination. Some one used it in this way, and what it then was became widely known—strychnia or something a little less deadly. Henceforth a sort of terror was attached, not only to that combination, but to all its elements.

To give but one example. Among the offices of the Holy Spirit is that of direct guidance. But other elements to be combined with this are the testimony of Scripture, and an enlightened judgment. Let the proportions of the latter fall but a little short, and at once we have fanaticism.

Or to give an instance of truth and error thus combining—what doctrine can be more stimulating, or more nutritious even, than the blessed hope of the return of our Lord in His power and glory? And yet again and again, has a carnal thirst for earthly splendors, or the presumptuous attempt to know the times and seasons, brought this truth into disrepute. And yet whoever thinks, to go back to the Duke's instance, of

giving up tea because strychnine is so nearly like it?

Sometimes, mere abundance may turn a flower into a weed. I could scarcely credit my eyes when I first saw the ox-eye daisy—that chief of outcasts—adorning the windows of Paris as the cherished marguerite. Doubtless there will come some happy time, when we can have many a now rejected weed for our enjoyment, as a fair flower once more.

How lovely is my garden to-day—now that I think it is without a weed! Yet, alas for that unhappy day when I trusted a gardener to help on my work, and found afterwards that many a petted little plant, and some of great value had disappeared. Only a wise and loving hand is fit to do this work of weeding.

I passed by a garden yesterday, where many of the flowers were like my own. But oh how unsightly, when it might, with this one care have been made so pleasant. Oh, laborers together with God, in your spiritual husbandry, count it not enough to sow your seed, and to water it, but set yourselves faithfully, tenderly, to this divinely appointed task. All other care is wasted; if by sinful negligence you fail in this one duty.

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Take as your model the Epistle to the Ephesians, where St. Paul shows such skill in so speaking the truth in love, that he never puts out one hand to draw forth a weed, without the other being busy in helping on the growth of some fair flower that blooms beside it, and for the sake of which you see that it must go. The God of love and wisdom teach us all the secret of such heavenly skill !

V.

Fragrance.



## V.

### Fragrance.

“There’s not a flower of spring  
That dies in June, but vaunts itself allied  
By issue and symbol, by significance  
And correspondence, to that spirit world,  
Outside the limits of our space and time,  
Whereto we are bound.”

MRS. BROWNING.

Is there any thing so subtle as fragrance? What *is* it?—we ask in vain. And while our philosophers go on through the ages, shifting their theories of light and of sound, here is something so unsubstantial, yet so powerful, so all pervading, yet so penetrating, stealing in till it seems to mingle with the very essence of the soul itself, that even science draws back not in perplexity alone, but as hesitating to be guilty of a profanation. She can contrive all

manner of instruments and apparatus to invade those mysteries of light and sound, but she can find no aid whatsoever as she enters this sanctity of "a soul dissolving odor."

Had it pleased God to make but one sweet smell in all the earth, that had been a priceless blessing; or to vary it as He has varied color, that had been still more; but giving it as He has—varied to the utmost bound, He has imparted a unique element to this boon, as to none other given to our senses.

We find not unfrequently a repetition of tints in flowers, so that one is like another; but we never find this in fragrance. Nothing is more unmistakable, and yet so almost utterly indefinable. Here language fails. Sounds can be measured with the utmost accuracy through scale after scale, and we have a rich vocabulary to define their qualities. So too we have a whole regiment of terms for defining color, while art can imitate approximately any hue in nature. But the moment we enter the world of sweet smells, we have only a few feebly descriptive words, while the art of man is suddenly limited to mere conservation and combination. And yet this nameless something it is, which more than

any thing else, gives character to each flower, and secures for it an abiding place in our affections.

I have been led into these thoughts by the deliciousness of my study this morning, after I had arranged its flowers. Satisfying as the fair forms are to the eye, I can not sit and look at them all day; only now and then may I indulge in the luxury of a glance. But all the day long, as I read, and write, and talk with my friends, I shall carry within me a deep sweet consciousness of my flowers. Every breath of mine will be blended with their breath, and the very spirit of the flowers will pass into my spirit.

Yonder in that little bracket-vase of a tailor bird upon her nest, that hangs upon the wall behind my study chair, is a graceful grouping of flowers so delicate that it will attract only quick eyes. It is simply filled with sprays of that modest flower which men call "Gypsophila paniculata," but which women call "Baby's breath;" and then here and there through this sort of bridal veil, shining with its tiny silver stars, peep the long stemmed blossoms of the dear old-fashioned sweet pea.

Ah! poor little flower, with its plebeian fam-

ily, and its inability to suit the freaks of the florists by growing double, or otherwise monstrous, it is yet sure to hold its place in cottage and palace to the end of time, or so long as it can keep that same sweet breath. Even its simple name is respected; and in all our catalogues it is entered without any learned title, and no one dare do more, than, now and then by the side of some more pretentious variety, to put *Lathyrus* in a bracket. It is noteworthy also that in looking for it in the alphabetical list, you turn to S. and not to P.—the *sweet* having grown to be a part of its name, and no more a mere descriptive.

Yes, little painted lady, in thy pure white robes and maiden blush, and yet more in thy inimitable breath, are charms that no “Violet Queen,” nor “Crown Princess of Prussia,” nor “Invincible scarlet,” can ever rival. If I have put their blossoms among thine in my garden, it is chiefly to show that thou art never so fair as when seen in the midst of them all.

I can not help a little doting over this dower of beauty, so free from all pretence, so unaffected. I remember some grand lady once sweeping past a group of flowers upon leaving my cottage, who,

spying this little pet of mine, trained modestly in their midst, exclaimed in a half suppressed contemptuous astonishment: "But what are these? P-e-a-s?"

Yes, peas, my good lady, for all such souls as have had their spiritual senses smothered in silks and satins, and never knew what it was to lay a true and open heart against the beating heart of nature. But for others, for spirits simple as themselves, and as unspoiled from the hand of God, one of the sweetest gifts He ever gave us among His flowers, that never appeals to admiration, but solely to love.

So one more look at your sweet faces, and then all day long you will possess me. Your reviving breath will float over the old folios and octavos, and when I am well nigh lost in the intricacies of dogma and the strife of tongues, sounding so shrill through all these church centuries, your fragrance, in the swift transmutation of such ethereal forces, shall become a music that shall accord with the pure glad melody of the simple Gospel of my Bible, and its angelic heralding: "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will to men."

Yet, what is this fragrance? What is it? I

can not help asking, again and again, for the very wonder of it. What is it that is ever flowing out and flowing forth, and yet never failing? How came it there, and how has it power to waft itself abroad? Who but the God that is a Spirit, could give this well nigh spiritual power to the earthly substance of a flower. Oh, if it be that His hands not only made them at the first, but that still "in His hands is the breath of every living thing, and the breath of all mankind," then somehow, from Him this fragrance flows. Is it His breath touching the flower, and making it so sweet, that He may have one more link between His Spirit and our spirits?

How natural it is in the arrangement of flowers, to place the fragrant ones the nearest to us. As I glance around my room, I see how almost unconsciously I have done this. Far off is the vase that holds my gay tropæolums with all their brilliancy. Few flowers are more effective, when properly massed; but it is the eye alone that they delight. And my gladioli, with their fine spikes, and all their wealth of color, and exquisite shadings and markings, every eye is sure to be drawn to them, place them where I may; but still they do not hold you at their side.

You greatly admire, you almost revel in their beauty, and yet you will never find yourselves heartily loving them, or turning to them for any ministry of comfort.

But there, on the side of my organ, is the stock with its rich, far reaching fragrance; and beneath its heavy white clusters droop the small pale-blue bells of a clematis, with their faint spicy sweetness, as from their native wild wood. Fragrance and praise belong together; and though I have done it instinctively, I can not remember ever to have placed there a merely showy flower.

And on my study-table, and on my reading-stand, and wherever they can get nearest, crowd the heliotrope, and roses, and carnations, and mignonette.

Poor little mignonette ! dost thou know my little darling, that thou hadst been called a weed but for thy surpassing sweetness; but that having that, thou art indeed a flower, and needst never have a fear that thou wilt be forgotten. Fashion, that fickle mistress of ceremonies, guards even the entrance to a flower garden, and now and then strangely frowns upon her old favorites. But thou hast a life-long passport granted thee.

And what a mission is thine, hiding thyself in any little corner, ready to conceal the failure of any thing else, never pushing to the front; but purifying the very atmosphere, they tell us; meeting any stray malarial whiffs, and even as a soft answer turneth away wrath, sending them on their way disarmed of all their power to harm.

So, lest from yonder valley, some such foul breath should wander, I have set thee as a guard, beneath my window; on one side of the narrow walk, that leads past it, the petunias; and thou upon the other, nestling among my lilies, and helping to screen their roots from the scorching sun. And so your sweet breaths mingle and steal through my open window all night long, till in the morning the sweet-brier on the hill-side, masses her sweets beneath the dews and overpowers you.

What a benediction is this fragrance of the early morning ! The vernal grass fills the whole atmosphere as with a shower of sweetness. And then the rose border. What intensity in those odorous buds of the Bon Silene, making the very spirit bound as though a message had reached it from heaven. And the verbena bed is all com-

passed with fitful fragrance. Even the pansies with their dewy eyes, are ready to rival the violets now. Most especially do the fragrant leaves make this the hour of their choice favors. My rose geranium scarcely needs a finger touch to win her response, and the lemon verbena is freer still, with her bounty. Nor must the purple buds of the calycanthus be forgotten. "Sweet-scented shrub," indeed, for let me hide but a single one of these in some fold of my dress, and the spices of Araby will float around me till the evening.

And this prime hour of fragrance, is the hour so many miss upon beds of sloth, never half knowing what a beautiful, marvellous world is around them. Not all the long hours of day can possibly bring back again the charm and blessedness of this, either to the body or to the soul.

It is likewise another world we enter, when in the stillness of the early morn, the Sun of righteousness shines anew upon the soft bedewing of the spirit. That is the chosen hour for the south-wind to wake, and blow upon the garden, that the spices thereof may flow out. If we only knew what freshness and fragrance are waiting

for our souls, would not more of us like the royal singer “awake the dawn”?

This too is the hour for all sweet sights, and sounds. How often do I live over again in my own garden, the memories of some early morning hours among the Alps! I see once more the shadows flee away, and give place to that crystalline clearness that none ever see, unless at dawn. And now it is the Jungfrau that draws nearer and nearer, still bearing down slowly upon the spirit as we twain stand there together, till thought bounds exultingly to her snow summit; and now it is the mighty Mont Blanc, that is no longer a far off thing, but moves steadily, nearer, nearer, till the eye only asks a bridge long enough to span those blue Genevan waves before we might rest upon its peak. An hour, or even a half hour later, and the glorious vision is ended. The mountains are far off and mantled with mist. “One might as well not go to Switzerland at all, as to go unprepared to rise at four in the morning.” Such was the counsel that gave me these life-long possessions of beauty.

And shall I tell still further the simple conviction, that flashed upon my conscience, as I found my rich reward for the unquestionable effort? „

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“You have done this to behold the glory of the mountains, why can you not also awake early to look upon the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ ?” Yes, truly the same law is found working in that higher sphere. It is in the early morning hour that the unseen is seen, and that the far off beauty and glory, vanquishing all their vagueness, move down upon us, till they stand clear as crystal, close over against the soul. Then does that Righteousness which is like the great mountains, stand out distinct in all its length and all its height, with range beyond range, and summit over summit, till in this clear and solemn vision, we almost forget that even yet we see but afar off, see but in part. But who can measure the holy elevation of soul that comes from such communing, before the day !

How often too, as in the early coolness, I have foreboded the intense heat of noon, has it been my delight to water once more, with my own hands, some of my most petted flowers; nor can I ever do it without saying over to myself the sonnet in which Archbishop Trench has so gracefully linked the heavenly with the earthly.

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“A garden so well watered before morn  
Is hotly up, that not the swart sun’s blaze,  
Down beating with unmitigated rays,  
Nor scorching winds, from fiery deserts borne,  
Shall quite prevail to leave it bare and shorn  
Of its green beauty, shall not quite prevail  
That all its morning freshness shall exhale,  
Till evening and the evening dews return—  
A blessing such as this our hearts might reap,  
The freshness of the garden they might share,  
Through the long day a heavenly freshness keep,  
If, knowing how the day, and the day’s glare  
Must beat upon them, we would largely steep  
And water them betimes with dews of prayer.”

To return once more to the subject in hand, I am inclined to believe that as on the one hand the sense of smell must rank among the most ignoble, however serviceable, of animal instincts, so on the other it may be developed into one of the finest and most spiritual of powers; belonging in this way, only to the most highly organized beings. How little is made of it in ordinary life. Even among the poets it is only now and then that you meet with any real appreciation of its delights. The poet Wordsworth indeed lacked this sense—and only once in some abnormal condition of health, smelt a bed of stock-gilly-flowers which seemed to him like a vision of

Paradise. I have this day been looking over one of the latest and largest botanical text books, most exhaustive in its treatment of the deepest mysteries of vegetable life,—but nowhere through its eight hundred and fifty pages, so far as I can see, does the learned German author intimate that flowers are possessed of fragrance! See on the other hand what a place is given it in the Scriptures, honoring the oriental habit of associating sweet and reviving odors with the persons of one's friends. The dying Isaac smells the smell of his son's raiment and exclaims, "See, the smell of my son is as the smell of a field which the Lord hath blessed: *Therefore* God give thee of the dew of heaven and the fatness of the earth, and plenty of corn and wine." The sweet smell that went up from the altar of sacrifice is continually noted, and reappears in its spiritualized form in the epistles, as "the odor of a sweet smell, a sacrifice acceptable, well pleasing to God."

We are told that the various odors can be grouped and combined until nine classes exhaust the list. But surely whoever has done this, was strangely lacking in that acuteness of sense upon which all keen enjoyment depends. Who for in-

stance could classify or imitate the odor of an orchid? Once in my life I received an almost royal gift of its exotic blossoms. I arranged them, absorbed in this rare beauty, placing each of the ten species in groups by themselves—my eye half dazzled by these strange shapes and perfect tints. But on returning later to the room which their fragrance had found time to fill, I was hushed as in the ethereal atmosphere of heaven. There was something about it altogether unlike this earth; so unobtrusive yet so wooing; now far away for you to search it, and then rushing like a swift breeze into the depths of your being.

Yes, I repeat it again, that fragrance more than any thing else gives character to a flower, and decides the quality and nature of our love.

And what name shall be found for that still nameless something—that subtle influence—that atmosphere, as we sometimes call it, that emanates from human spirits; and which is to their quiescent state that which so called magnetism is to their active state. There is nothing so akin to it as this fragrance of flowers.

As with the flowers, it is not all who possess it. There are some who will always win our admiration and homage, but who, lacking this,

do not satisfy us fully. It is this sweetness of spirit that is indissolubly linked with love—wins it, and keeps it. Having this, all other merit need not go seeking for recognition, but is itself sought for. You might pass many a spot where the rose and the woodbine and the jessamine flourish half hidden, but their breath is about you, and straightway your eye searches them out. You are walking it may be in some wild spot, and your eye is on the beauty of a winding river, or the majesty of the hills—when suddenly you start a little; another presence quietly claims you; "Violets!"—Yes, they fill the air with that most expansive of perfumes—so that whether you shall turn this way or that you know not—and yet you will not go on till you have found the sweet treasures, hide themselves as best they may. Blessed be God, that the sweetness of so many lowly spirits refreshes our hearts in these wilds of earth. And thanks be to God also that the fragrance of a life may be in part preserved; that even as the sweet odors are taken from the flowers to give refreshment when they have faded, and to bear it to far off places, so the saintly lives of the departed leave behind them this chief of all their gifts.

I am specially reminded of this by the biographies which I have just been reading in unusual number. Some of these lives had unmistakable elements of greatness, almost of grandeur, and were gifted well-nigh as marvellously by Grace as by Nature; and yet so it is that as we read and admire, no sweet breath floats out upon us—unless it be now and then, when we see them bruised a little in the affliction hand of God.

But from other lives—less brilliant, less accomplished, even far less known by the onlooking world, there escapes such an aroma of goodness as penetrates to the depths of the soul. Such a fragrant life was that of the sweet singer of holy songs who has this summer been taken from us.\* A sort of spicy freshness floats all around those pages in which her gifts and graces are so imperfectly embalmed; and the turning of each new leaf brings anew the stimulant sweetness of her life to our own.

And the saintly Muhlenberg †—what a fragrant life was his! The sweetness of a heavenly mind was the greatest gift his God gave unto him. Wherever the loving record of that utterly un-

\* Frances Ridley Havergal.

† “Life and Work of William Augustus Muhlenberg.”

selfish life is carried, there surely the house will be filled with the odor of that costly ointment which it was his rare privilege to break upon the feet of Jesus; and to visit his St. Johnland and breathe the Christ-like spirit of the place, is like bending over a harvest of hoarded fruit when the tree that gave it is felled.

Alike among the living and the dead, this unnamed power, that reaches you, possesses you; and refreshes your inmost being, bringing you blessed thoughts of God—this impalpable, indefinable presence that depends not upon features, or bearing or speech, although it may pervade them all, what and whence is it but the nearest and most subtle partaking of His divine nature that our Blessed Lord can impart.

Daniel had it, and even Belshazzar's queen with senses all dulled in a luxurious, selfish court, could but perceive his "excellent spirit," and call it "the spirit of the holy gods": and this same excellent spirit it was that led Darius to prefer him above all presidents and princes.

How full is the Song of Songs of all fragrant things. A song of love must needs be so. The well-beloved is as "a bundle of myrrh" and "a cluster of camphor." His "name is as ointment

poured forth." He cometh out of the wilderness perfumed with myrrh and frankincense and all powders of the merchant.

Yes, blessed Lord Jesus, the best-beloved of Thine own, even so has the record of Thy life reached down to us; and there is not a grace and not a virtue, the sweetness of which was not first embodied in Thee, and is still ever shed forth.

In the great renewing of all things, may not this gift of fragrance—even now the subtlest of God's outward gifts, and ever pointing to that which is spiritual, become a part of that which is now signified, being itself spiritualized? Surely when the bride has made herself ready, then will her royal Bridegroom say to her, "The fragrance of thy garments is like the fragrance of Lebanon."

"Thy plants are an orchard of pomegranites,  
with most excellent fruit;  
cypress flowers with nards.

Nard and crocus, calamus and cinnamon,  
with every variety of incense woods;  
myrrh and aloes,  
with all the chief spice plants."

And oh, ye whom God has set in His garden,

not as the giant oaks for strength, nor as the tree that bears abundant fruit,—count it no vain calling, though ye may seem the least and last of all the plants that claim His care, if still your life is a life of sweetness: and be well content to please your Creator by this blessed service of ever having a reviving breath to pour out upon the passer-by, or to fill the little sphere in which you live with a continual fragrance.



VI.

Pot-Bound.



## VI.

### Pot-Bound.

“Still uppermost,  
Nature was at his heart as if he felt,  
Though yet he knew not how, a wasting power,  
In all things which from her sweet influence  
Might tend to wean him. Therefore with her hues,  
Her forms, and with the spirit of her forms,  
*He clothed the nakedness of austere truth.”*

WORDSWORTH.

And what is the lesson of this morning?—was the eager question of one of a small group of friends, whom I joined at breakfast—fresh from my work in the garden. It had come to be taken for granted that as soon as the morning greetings were over, I should thus furnish the topic for the time, which followed somewhat naturally the unlading of my full hands of their freight of choicest buds and blossoms for each. She who asked the question—herself like

a flower among the flowers—will never again brighten my home and garden, as the ever welcome guest.

I little thought that spring when she looked so lovingly upon my lilies of the valley, that they would be planted the next year to open their blossoms upon her grave. But none the less is she still a part of my life; and the glow and fervor and brightness of her being, are linked forever in hallowed association with many of my flowers. I see that sweet face now, from which not all the cares of life, nor the motherhood of many sons, nor all the strain that came often upon a heart, as tender as true in its sympathies, could at all take away the dewy freshness and eagerness of a child. Her loving appreciation always quickened me in finding and treasuring these lessons from my garden.

Her question was at once echoed by another—  
“Yes, tell us what you have been learning new this morning, *something*, very plainly.”

I glanced a moment at the faces so glowing with affection and intelligence, and then made my brief answer—“Pot-bound!”

There was first a ripple of smiles, and then a merry burst of laughter, and finally a volley of

questions as to what that meant; and yet before our talk was over, I think there were tears in all our eyes.

That was four years ago; but it has all come back most vividly in memory as the same lesson has been reviewed this morning. I will cite here the fresher experience, and then supplement it as best I can out of that conversation of long ago.

When my German stocks were planted out this spring, I reserved a few in small pots to take the place of such as might prove single. For the stock is almost peculiar in this, that the single flowers are remarkably lacking both in beauty and fragrance. In spite of all the fancies of florists, my taste persists in its preference for the single petunia, banishes from my precincts the double geranium, and cherishes a sly liking for even the single tuberose. I will admit that the rose is a great exception, and yet the English sweet-brier has its own incomparable grace. Not so however with stocks. The long loose straggling stems of shapeless single flowers, can scarcely be tolerated. For aught I know, there may be a natural state very different, but certainly those that from seed of double

stocks fail of being double, wear a most discomfited look.

This morning I found that all in my flower-bed were at last in bloom, and alas! fully half of them single. So I turned to my reserve in the pots. They had been transferred once to pots of a larger size, but in the press of cares further transfer was neglected. They had been faithfully watered, but I had given them no attention myself. So now I found a sad failure. Compared with the others, set out so long ago, they were mere pygmies. Soon exhausting all the soil, the little roots searching round and round for food, found themselves thwarted at every turn by the hard walls of the earthen pot; and finally after crowding it full of hungry fibres, they could do nothing but stand still. As I turned them carefully out of the pots, there was nothing to be seen save a thickly matted mass of dingy white roots. The plants were alive, but not one of them in bloom, or even in bud. They were, as the gardeners say, *pot-bound*.

All that is signified by this, can be better known by a glance at the more prosperous members of the family now blooming in my flower-bed. Only look at those vigorous branches that

have shot out freely around the main stalk, and note how many of them are even at this early season loaded with those close-set, snow-white blossoms. No flower in my garden has such a style of massing both its beauty and fragrance. I can cut freely from these plants for myself and for my friends, and they will thrive all the more. From these early days of July, on into October, past all the lighter frosts, they will continue this lavish bloom.

The stock revels in the dews; and to lift one of those heavy heads bowed under their weight, all bathed and brilliant, is one of the special delights of the early morning. And all this is the measure of the loss of my pot-bound plants. Ah, pitiable little objects!—starved in the midst of plenty, because only a thin wall came between you and fertile mother earth,—I look upon you with compassionate regrets. Never to you can I turn to gather the rich stores of delight which might so easily have been your portion. All those weeks of soft showers, and long refreshing rains, lost by you! All these days of sunshine, in which every thing seems ready to leap forth for gladness, lost for you! You have been losing, too, more than this, even the very habit

of growth; and now it will take much of precious time to recover merely that; and then the sultry August suns will beat fiercely upon the garden, and with my utmost skill put forth upon you, you can by no possibility overtake your freer sisters.

But as often happens to me, while holding in my hand these little pot-bound plants, my busy fancy clothes them with a human garb. I see then not stocks, but souls;—souls that God destined for great growth and abundant bloom, putting in them richly the potentialities of this; but alas! instead of making this their calling and election sure, I see them pot-bound in narrow, cramping, man-made systems of thought and action; instead of being set free indeed to flourish in the full riches of "*the whole truth.*"

How often have I found the lesson in my garden, and the line of thought suggested by my reading, in striking harmony. It was only yesterday that I was reading the answer of St. Paul before Felix, as given in Acts xxiv., and noting a point which the readers of our English version miss, that the "sect" of the fifth verse and the "heresy" of the fourteenth, are the same in the Greek. Looking up the word once more in my

lexicon, I noted how innocent it was at first; coming from a root signifying to choose, and meaning simply the part that was chosen. But at last because it was *a part* and therefore not the perfect whole, it acquired a bad sense, and became that dreadful thing—heresy.

For not only is truth a whole, but an organic whole; and while there may be but a few members of it whose loss would involve that of life itself, yet it has none so small that their removal is not after all a loss and a deformity.

Every heresy repeats substantially the same career;—first a portion of the truth hitherto neglected is recognized; then follows its dislocation from the entire body of truth; its distortion next; and finally its union with positive error.

And then how could I but recall as I glanced over the ancient course of sects and heresies, the bitter bickerings that had polluted the most precious doctrines;—how again and again men had grappled with the mere might of intellect the things hard to be understood, and never to be understood save by the devout heart and meek spirit, and so had wrested them to their own destruction and that of many others. I remem-

bered how the pages of church history were filled, not with the records of heavenly fellowship, and therefore deeper insight into the things of God, but too often with sharp discussions and violent disputes. And even down to our own time whether the few have met socially, or the many in solemn convocation, rare as oases in the desert, have been the occasions when the all-absorbing themes were the love of Christ, the power of the Holy Spirit, and our wondrous fellowship with the Father through His dear Son.

Divisions and sub-divisions have failed to secure this concord. How often indeed do those who professedly agree, bring the more animosity into their remaining disagreements. Wherever there is great zeal unbalanced by wisdom, there the temptation enters to place the favorite doctrine beneath the microscope, forgetting that the more it is magnified the narrower is the field of vision, and the more is there crowded out. Perhaps all truth may at times and for specific purposes pass profitably under the lens. But a fatal thing it is, not only to keep it there, but to magnify more and more, till the very little that is seen becomes dim and spectral. Such narrowness *must* end in consummate heresy.

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Having thus taken this long flight of thought (apparently as far off from my flower-pots as in those curious cases of associated facts given by Funcke in his inimitable “St. Paulus zu Wasser und zu Land”), I come back to my text, and the old meaning of heresy in the New Testament, as simply a sect or division. Thus we have as the English rendering of the word—“the *sect* of the Pharisees,” “the *sect* of the Sadducees”; and then in the passage already referred to, Acts xxiv. 5, “the *sect* of the Nazarenes.” So Tertullus said; and St. Paul only uses the word as giving his opponent’s view of the case, when he declares, v. 14, —“But this I confess unto thee that after the way which *they call a sect*, so worship I the God of my fathers.”

His own faith was not the faith of a sect, for who ever taught so earnestly as St. Paul, the unity of the one Body, with one Lord, one Faith, one Baptism, one hope of our calling? For more than the space of three years would he have wept, had he foreseen to the full what our eyes behold so calmly, *Christendom in sects*; each of these, so far as it is a sect, being partial and prejudiced, and using some narrowing system to shut out the spirit from the free and natural ab-

and liberty. And yet here at our very feet lies the rich virgin soil of truth divine, and in it all the elements that are needed for the full sustenance of our spirits, to establish, strengthen, settle us:—and this has been our pitiful use of it; to gather up a little handful of it, and shaping it first into a form, then to dry it into formalism, and finally with as much of truth as *that* will hold, and no more, to attempt to nourish our souls.

And now I go back to the breakfast talk with which this chapter opened, to answer some of the questions then asked.

—“Why then use these pots at all?”

They have their season of service; they belong to infancy: at a certain period they are even invaluable in developing a mass of working roots, which shall furnish a sure basis of growth when the plant is transferred to the open border. True, that is only relatively the best process. Whenever it is practicable, a flower is ever the better for being sown in the self-same spot where it is to grow. This is the way of nature, and even in our gardens, whatever can spring up from being self-sown, is vastly more vigorous than by any other process. But many circumstances combine

to make this impossible, or difficult in most cases; so that under existing circumstances, the plan of potting is the wiser, but only for a time; the moment growth is arrested by it, the evil sets in. However, please observe that I am not dealing with an inspired type, and am not at all bound to prove a perfect analogy.

—“But are we to understand you as implying, that all Church organizations are evils, as such ?”

No ! and again and again, No ! Nothing is clearer in Holy Scripture, than that order and discipline are divinely ordained in the family of God, and it is almost equally clear that their details were very largely entrusted to the judgment of the Church, under the guidance of her Heavenly Head. Few tendencies are more to be deprecated, than the desire to cast off such restraints. Those who are *in* authority have need, indeed, to consider how far they are responsible for any abuse of power and influence, but for those *under* authority, there can be little doubt that loyalty is better than license, better often than liberty. Indeed do we not know in other spheres than this, that the truest liberty consists with even rigid law and limitations. We have far too little

of obedience to authority for our good. There is more than one way of breaking the fifth commandment. The shocking irreverence of our age transgresses as much in the Church, as in the family, and so each man's pope is his own opinion.

The great evil to be shunned is of another sort, and springs from more interior causes. It is sectarian selfishness, party prejudice, fossilized faith; precisely that narrowing, cramping, isolating influence which formed the first point of attack in St. Paul's First Epistle to the Corinthians.

Had the apostle who was so skilled in borrowing apt imagery, been a gardener, instead of a tent-maker, and so had seen what I have this morning, one could easily imagine him proceeding forthwith to picture these divided and contentious saints, as bound, some in a Pauline pot, some in an Apollonian, and some in a pot shaped by Cephas; and he would have hastened to turn them out of these (albeit tensfold the size of our modern make of endless —ist and —ian pots) saying as he did so: "*All things* are yours! Whether Paul or Apollos or Cephas, *all* are yours!" True, any one of these might be the specially helpful teacher at first, but never was

one to limit himself, by taking upon him such a name as "of Paul," or "of Apollos," or "of Cephas;" he must always be "of Christ." Why take the finite when the infinite is ours? Why suffer any portion of the truth, however precious to become an incrustation, shutting us out from the wealth of all the rest?

—"But what then, do you make of these choice exotics that are nearly always kept in pots? Your beautiful agapanthus is blooming in a pot. Your callas are in pots, and that superb amaryllis."

Well, my answer must be a little like St. Paul's. "I suppose that this is good for the present necessity." It certainly, as I said before, is not the best in the natural state of things, for nothing was ever created in a pot: but surrounded, as such plants are, by so many unnatural conditions, it is the best under existing circumstances. Moreover, these bulbous plants seem to have special laws of life, and the secret of thriving upon very little soil, so it be of the best and abundantly watered. I may as well admit, also, that some, the amaryllis vallota is a striking example, will not bloom at all, unless pot-bound. I lost years in finding that out. It passes my

comprehension even now; but I accept the fact, and with it another, that there are *some* human beings so peculiarly constituted as to accomplish most, in a very limited range of thought and action. As to the family of bulbs in general, they remind me of those large-hearted Christians, who, never being straitened in themselves, seem able to triumph over all straitness in their surroundings.

I have another little plant, one of the epiphytes, possessed of such vitality as to thrive in every thing. I have tried it alternately, the past six months in *air* and *earth* and *water* with little difference of result. But the Christian species of epiphytes must be very limited.

—"But may you not over-estimate the loss in being pot-bound? However impoverished, those of whom you speak are still Christians; and if their souls are saved, is not that the main thing?"

And are you not using the word *saved* in too restricted a sense? But using it as you do, I would never say, that salvation was the main object of the Gospel, but the means to a glorious end. That distinction is the very point of this morning's lesson; but there is such fearful and

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wide-spread defect in current Christian instruction upon the subject, that one needs to cry aloud and spare not. And you remember that when Isaiah was to do that, the Lord charged him to "show *my people* their transgression;"—yes, and the very people who sought him daily, and delighted to know His ways.

Salvation, using it in its negative sense, has been widely preached as the great object of Christ's redemptive work, to secure which should be the one aim of life. Whereas it should be taught as the Scriptures teach, that salvation as a true gift, was *given freely* and *given fully*, when Christ died for our sins. All forgiveness and reconciliation and salvation date from the Cross of Christ. The *purpose* to bestow all these, antedates the ages; but then the gift became an accomplished fact. The actual reception of the gift, calls for one condition only,—simple belief. Starting then from this certainty, the Scriptures everywhere go on to emphasize the object of this salvation; which is briefly—conformity to Christ through union with Christ—an object so important as to be called in turn "the salvation ready to be revealed in the last time." Christians are never urged to make their *salvation*

sure, but to make *their calling and election* sure, as the only way of having an entrance ministered abundantly into the everlasting kingdom. But this subject is too vast, to more than touch upon.

If only Christians could be convinced of their short-comings, one main trouble would be removed. As it is, they try to be satisfied; and checking the convictions of conscience by much mutual congratulation, concentrate all their concern upon *the unsaved*. Whereas none of us *ought* to be satisfied with the present state of things in the churches themselves. Would that a trumpet voice might break in upon all such false ease, echoing and re-echoing those sure and solemn words: "HE SHALL SUFFER LOSS!" He, even the saved, shall suffer loss!

Only suppose, for instance, that the kind friend who gave me the choice seed of these stocks, had found me in this morning's plight, over my pot-bound plants; how would it have answered for me to assume an air of great content, and to say: "The seeds came up finely, and I am happy to say, the plants are all living!" Yet seriously I suppose their state as stocks is beyond that of very many Christians. Surely we were planted

in His garden, not to exist merely. He placed us there to adorn it and to be His joy. He placed us there to bear much fruit, and so to be to the praise of His glory. He placed us there to develope each of us to the utmost capabilities of nature, and the utmost possibilities of grace.

—“But are there not other ways of being pot-bound, than the one you have been speaking of?”

Ah yes, I have been thinking of so many other ways of becoming narrow in our interests, and our sympathies, intellectually, and socially, and always to our injury. All the little cliques of society, all partisan action tend to this; our very virtues, leave us exposed to the danger; for instance, great devotion to one's family, shutting us off from our wider responsibilities, and patriotism becoming national selfishness.

—“But what of those whose misfortune it is to be pot-bound, who have been so taught and trained, and know not how to get out of their straitness.”

Ah, that indeed. We can not go to the depths of any subject, without touching this wonderful question of solidarity, which is never so signifi-

cant as in the spiritual sphere, where we are all regarded as one body. Our responsibility for our influence over others, must be immense. How far this ever releases any from their own responsibility, who, but One can tell!

But this question brings to my mind another little lesson, which I trust may give us cheer for ourselves, and larger hope for others.

I was looking over my little lawn, one spring, in search of small weeds, when I saw a few tiny ovate leaves, I scarcely knew of what, but certainly not grass or clover, and therefore doomed. My knife was passing rapidly to its root when I saw suddenly among those leaves a flower, but such a flower! A pansy! but surely the sorriest pansy that ever struggled into existence. A stray seed had been lodged in the close turf, and had succeeded in this small way. I was smitten at once with admiration for its bravery; its fidelity too. Cast out, trodden under foot, among aliens, with no kind recognition, with little to help it, and with very much to hinder it, still it would do its best to be true to its calling, and was still a pansy. It could not look very bright, nor be very graceful; and yet it had done its utmost. "*It shall live,*" I said; forlorn as it is, it shall

have a chance now. And so looking hither and thither for a new home for it, I set it down, finally, in the rich soil of my rose border. Before that summer ended, it had won the admiration of all who saw it. Not one of all my high-bred pansies equalled this.

I am sure that little pansy had a special mission in this world, and I long for it to speak to others as it has spoken to me—to be ever of a good courage, and to accept all such straitness as may come through circumstances over which we have no control, and to bear with a meek heart, all that may come to us through the misunderstanding or even the malice of others; saying only, softly,

“When obstacles and trials seem  
Like prison walls to be,  
I do the little I can do,  
And leave the rest to Thee!”

In the lack of all human recognition, surely the Lord knoweth them that are His. He will never mistake their littleness so as to cast them away; and His great heart of love will go out to them, till He has done for them exceeding abundantly above all that they ask or think.



VII.

After the Rain.



## VII.

### After the Rain.

“See the earth,  
*The body of our body*, the green earth,  
Indubitably human like this flesh,  
And these articulated veins through which  
Our heart drives blood!”

MRS. BROWNING.

The weary drought is over! The blessed rain of heaven fell at last: and now it is as a new earth to look upon, and we that look as new beings. No more that sultry dryness—no more those hot and hurrying winds that seemed by some subtle sympathy to wither our very spirits.

Can it be that when our souls are set in unison with nature, there comes to us through her a sympathetic vibration, so that as the soft breath or the strong hand of God passes over her, and

calls forth her notes of gladness or of gloom, we are forced to respond in like manner? Or is it indeed that as "the body of our body," we can but throb and quiver with her? However it be, this sympathy with the moods of nature, apparently unknown to some, is a very certain fact to others. Nor can we possibly have the keen susceptibility to her joy without accepting her sorrow also.

"Never the exquisite pain, then never the exquisite bliss,  
For the heart that is dull to that can never be strung to this."

Yet who, for any suffering that nature ever brought us, would forego the dear delight. And then to heighten all present compensation comes the thought, that her deep groaning and our own moaning with her, will soon be ended; while it is an immortal boon to be thus—

"Baptized into the grace  
And privilege of seeing."

Even now, how easy is it to forget all those days of dust and dreariness, for the sweetness and freshness of but one day like this, after the rain.

And yet this sympathy with nature which makes man "subordinate to the east wind" is

but a half truth. The fellow to it, who has not experienced?—but who need ever try to describe it again, since Coleridge wrote his “Sibylline Leaves”:

“Oh lady! we receive but what we give,  
And in our life alone does nature live:  
Ours is her wedding garment, ours her shroud!  
And would we aught behold, of higher worth,  
Than that inanimate cold world allow’d  
To the poor, loveless, ever anxious crowd,  
Ah! from the soul itself must issue forth,  
A light, a glory, a fair luminous cloud  
Enveloping the earth—  
And from the soul itself must there be sent  
A sweet and potent voice, of its own birth,  
Of all sweet sounds the life and element!

Oh pure of heart! thou needst not ask of me  
What this strong music in the soul may be!  
What, and wherein it doth exist,  
This light, this glory, this fair luminous mist,  
This beautiful and *beauty making power*.

Joy, virtuous lady! joy that ne’er was given,  
Save to the pure, and in their purest hour,  
Life, and life’s effluence, cloud at once and shower,  
Joy, lady! is the spirit and the power,  
Which wedding nature to us gives in dower,  
A new earth and new heaven,  
Undreamt of by the sensual and the proud;  
Joy is the sweet voice, joy the luminous cloud—

We in ourselves rejoice!  
And thence flows all that charms or ear or sight,  
All melodies the echoes of that voice,  
All colors a suffusion from that light."

I have come down once more to my nook  
beneath the elm-tree, and have been drinking  
in the new delight—for surely

"'Tis one of the charmed days  
When the genius of God doth flow."

Earth and sky sit gazing each on the other's  
beauty. The breeze is fluttering more lightly  
than the butterfly that flits to and fro. There  
is not a blade of the fresh springing grass that  
does not seem to say,—“I have been satisfied.  
I have drunk of the rain of heaven and I give  
thanks.” There is a hush of holy rest in the  
air; the very birds are resting somewhere, save  
one little humming-bird that comes with its  
marvellous whir of wings to sip nectar from the  
fuchsias at my feet. The hum of insects is al-  
most inaudible, for every thing alike seems bathed  
in bliss.

All sweet things ever said or sung of such  
prime hours as this, come flitting through one's  
memory. And last of all, there come words  
that are older than all, that sing themselves

over and over to my listening heart, as I look out upon my garden after the rain.

“Their soul shall be like a watered garden.”

“Thou shalt be like a watered garden,  
And like a spring of water,  
Whose waters fail not.”

And so I sit and think of all the blessedness of heavenly rain, falling in due season upon the heart; of soft showers, of still dews, and of unfailing springs, of all the many ways in which He who watereth the earth, refreshes also the soul. In all these many ways has my little garden been watered, and in ways as various are the needs of thirsting spirits met.

There are some who make the unwise demand that the visitations of the Spirit to their souls should be overwhelming—sweeping all before them, like tropical tempests. But for refreshment and the quickening of growth, there is nothing like the gentle shower. God’s best ways are quiet ways: and it is only when the earth has been long parched, and the very springs fail at their sources, that there is sometimes a need to have the great fountains of heaven unsealed, and the rain to descend in torrents.

Sitting here with my Bible in hand, and turning from one passage to another where the rain is spoken of, I am especially struck with its being always recognized as a special and sovereign gift of God. We live in a universe of law, and God Himself has been well pleased to place His fixed ordinances even in His covenant of mercy. "While the earth remaineth, seed-time and harvest, and cold and heat, and summer and winter, and day and night, shall not cease." Not so with the winds and the rain. These He reserves for His providential dealings, only to a limited extent subjecting them to any order.

I read then that for His people's sin "He shutteth up the heaven that there be no rain": and again upon their repentance "He giveth rain"—"He causeth it to rain whether for correction, for the land, or for mercy"—"He saith to the snow, 'Be thou on the earth,' and to the small rain and the great rain of His strength." All is as *He saith*. It is no chance then, nor the working of a fixed law, that decides in every storm of winter, which of the thousand forms of snow crystals shall then fall; nor in the summertime whether it shall be the small rain or the

great rain. The very size of the rain-drops is ever as "He saith."

Nothing therefore in nature brings us so close to the immediate decisions and present acts of God the Creator as does the rain. Each spot where it shall fall He also determines. "I caused it to rain upon one city, and caused it not to rain upon another city; one piece was rained upon, and the piece whereupon it rained not, withered."

The barrenness of the Holy Land has long witnessed to the truth of God's warning word.

"And it shall come to pass, if ye shall hearken diligently unto my commandments which I command you this day, to love the Lord your God, and to serve Him with all your heart, and with all your soul,

"That I will give you the rain of your land in his due season, the first rain and the latter rain, that thou mayest gather in thy corn, and thy wine, and thine oil.

. . . . .

"Take heed to yourselves, that your heart be not deceived, and ye turn aside, and serve other gods, and worship them;

"And then the Lord's wrath be kindled against you, and He shut up the heaven, that there be

no rain, and that the land yield not her fruit." (Deut. xi. 13-17).

The fulfilment of this is all the more striking that it is not the lack of rain, but the lack of its timely distribution as "the first rain and the latter rain" that causes the present absence of fertility. More rain it is claimed actually falls each year in Palestine than upon any equal area in the United States. The drouth and dearth are due simply to the fact that at present there is only one rainy season. The Prophet Jeremiah distinctly assigns this as the cause: "The *showers* have been withholden, and there hath been no *latter rain*" (Jer. iii. 3).

So too of days that are yet to come upon that land Ezekiel prophesies, "I will cause the *shower* to come down in his season; there shall be showers of blessing" (Ezek. xxxiv. 26). And again Zechariah writes, "Ask ye of the Lord rain *in the time of the latter rain*; so the Lord shall make bright clouds, and give them showers of rain, to every one grass in the field" (Zech. x. 1). And most striking is it when the same prophet announces that in that millennial time the Lord will still so control the rain that the nations which go not up to Jerusalem to keep the feast

of tabernacles shall have none fall upon their lands (See Zech. xiv. 16, 17).

But it is not by rain and showers alone that God will water the land. Along with almost every prophecy that foretells the future blessedness of restored Israel, we find the promise of fountains and rivers, while the entire context indicates that this is to be understood literally. Thus Isaiah tells us more than once how "in the wilderness shall waters break out, and streams in the desert"; while Ezekiel describes the wonderful waters that flowing from the temple, are to widen and deepen, and bring life along their path, and healing even to the Dead Sea. And yet again, Zechariah foretells still more wonderful and convulsive physical changes that will place Jerusalem upon a highway of waters, and connect it thus with the two great seas upon the east and the west. How it thrills me to sit here in this little garden and read those words written thousands of years ago, and waiting still for their accomplishment, which in the end will come and will not tarry. Do any of you ask what can Judea be to me? Then I must answer that *it is much to our Lord*. "A land which the Lord thy God careth for: the eyes of the Lord thy God

are always upon it, from the beginning of the year even unto the end of the year" (Deut. xi. 12). It is as plainly His elect land as Israel is His elect people; and to me nothing can be more natural, as I see my own little garden that I so love and care for refreshed by the rain, than to consider sadly how His land still lieth desolate; and then to think exultingly of all the beauty and glory that shall yet fill it. My lips involuntarily burst forth in the song of Isaiah (lxii. 5),

"For as a young man weddeth a virgin,  
So shall thy Restorer wed thee;  
And with the joy of a bridegroom in his bride,  
So shall thy God rejoice in thee!"

My Bible grows real to me in its most neglected regions, as I see it thus link together the past and the future, things earthly and things heavenly.

But I must not overlook other passages which speak of God's fatherly faithfulness in sending rain upon the just and on the unjust. I linger long over these beautiful and most suggestive words of St. Paul at Lystra—

"Who in times past suffered all nations to walk in their own ways.

"Nevertheless He left not Himself without witness, in that He did good, and gave us rain from heaven, and fruitful seasons, filling our hearts with food and gladness" (Acts xiv. 16, 17).

So while the people who had His law were placed under that special training of reward and punishment, which now gave and now withheld their rain, those other nations who had it not, and whom He suffered to walk in their own ways, were all the time receiving this powerful witness that there was a God of love—"rain from heaven and fruitful seasons." How wonderful that being what they were—and that St. Paul elsewhere tells us in solemn, fearful words—yet *nevertheless* God filled their hearts with food and gladness! What gladness was left for them—our narrower thought might ask—but still God made them even glad. So as I sit here in my garden this morning after the rain, how can I but think of all the heathen also, and of this loving attitude of God towards them, as so clearly preached to themselves by St. Paul; and how can I but offer the secret prayer that in all our thoughts of the heathen, and in all our messages to them, we may be truly the children of our Father which is in Heaven.

And now that we have seen what is the ministry of the rain for the Jew and for the Gentile, let us learn finally what use the Bible makes of it in teaching us who are of the Church of God.

In the sublime song of Moses, the oldest poem in the world, we have as the first promise there given by God, these rhythmic words, that sound not unlike the falling rain itself,

“My doctrine shall drop as the rain,  
My speech shall distil as the dew;  
As the small rain upon the tender herb,  
And as the showers upon the grass.”

DEUT. xxxii. 2.

Divine doctrine is then to the soul what the rain is to the earth. Not the most perfect seed in the most propitious soil, can ever reach its full development without the rain of heaven; and in proportion to its timely supply will be the beauty and fertility of the land. The earthly elements, however rich, can never suffice without the heavenly aid; as most surely no soul that is not constantly nourished by the Spirit of God working through His word and truth can ever be developed according to the eternal purpose.

Most remarkably is the analogy between the

two processes sustained, even in minute modes. It is a wonderful provision, which it is to be feared many have never even thought about, that the rain should fall in globules, and not as the sheet of a cataract. The gentleness with which it mostly falls so as to bring no harm to the tender herbage, is one of the most perfect of the processes of nature; while on the other hand the time thus allowed for the absorption of drop after drop, is usually so adjusted that there is little waste of the treasure.

How I watched the rain as it fell yesterday upon my newly mown grass. Not a blade was overlooked. All around, with the utmost impartiality, each of the tiny drops stole into its place, steadily, swiftly; and as eagerly the earth received them, so that nowhere the rain stood in little pools. How my thoughts followed them chasing each other down to the thirsty roots, while life began so visibly to course its upward way. How green it grew with every hour of the still falling rain; and this morning how glowing and brilliant it was in the sunrise, with every blade of grass crowned with a diamond. Even so God does not let loose His truth in overwhelming torrents upon our souls. It is here a little

and there a little as His word reaches our hearts. Are they the words of His prophets, or apostles, or more precious still, the teaching of our Lord Himself—then each holy word falls softly on the spirit, and there is not a thought or emotion or hidden power in our being that does not drink in the refreshment. One after another the revelations of His love, and power, and purpose, and of Himself, follow and follow still, sinking deeper and deeper, as we eagerly receive them; and of very necessity every grace is quickened from its deepest root into new vigor of life. Most blessed reality that His doctrine drops as the rain !

I overheard this morning the counsel given to a young Christian to "Let doctrine alone." Alas ! that its accepted sense should have come to be that of cumbrous systems and formal plans ! But such is not doctrine in the scriptural sense. The doctrine that falls as the rain is "the name of the Lord ;" all that makes known to us His Person, His character, His acts, His thoughts, His love. These we receive into our inmost being, and His divine nature is thus imparted to us, so that Christ liveth in us, as the rain lives in all our flowers and fruits and forests. Slowly and surely our spiritual being expands as the words

He speaks to us become unto us spirit and life.  
In proportion only to our receptivity can be our  
return of new life to Him.

But some one asks sadly, "What if the rain  
do *not* fall? What if the Spirit does not give us  
these special seasons of refreshment? What com-  
fort is there for us, who knew indeed what it was  
to be so watered in the bright spring-time of our  
spiritual life, but who dwell now in a dry land,  
and have no latter rain; who pray for showers and  
yet they come not?"

An answer awaits us in nature that is in per-  
fect harmony with the Word of God. Fertility  
and growth *attract* the rain. Wherever it is so  
drunk in, and comes forth in humid greenness—  
whether it be of grass, or harvest fields, or wood-  
lands, there the clouds will gather and the rain  
fall. It is as our Lord taught us: "Whosoever  
hath, to him shall be given, and he shall have  
more abundance."

If, drinking in His rain as it fell oft upon you  
at the first, you had brought forth the herbage  
that is meet for Him whose husbandry you are,  
then without fail His further and final blessings  
had been given you. But what use did you make  
of your spiritual refreshings in the past? Did

you receive them selfishly, to let them evaporate in some mere luxurious emotion? or were they wrought out in a holier life of loving service to the Lord and to one another?

Churches and communities sometimes bewail their dearth and drought, and marvel why in the days of old the showers of heaven were so abundant. Ah, but how many godly men and women in those days, stood like trees of righteousness, and by their prayers and by their service, drew down the blessing of God not only on themselves, but on others. As these have fallen there are few of like loftiness of soul to take their places. And when the forests are felled we need not wonder if the fountains fail, and the rain tarries. Most clearly it lies within the scope of our spiritual power to reclaim these blessings.

But how precious is that other part of the promise that "His speech shall distil as the dew." Not every day can we have those extraordinary refreshings which so uplift our souls; nor would it be best for our growth. But continually may we enjoy the still sustenance of the dew. It is one of the rarest exceptions when no dew falls in my garden, and perhaps it is nour-

ished even more in this way than by the rains. As I go to my morning work among the flowers, the dew rests everywhere, often as heavily as though a shower had fallen—that is everywhere that there is life to receive it; for I do not find the dew upon my garden walks, nor on any barren spot. But every leaf is laden, and every flower is fresh from this baptism by the Hand of God. And then as I lightly stir the soil around my flowers, where it is becoming hard and impervious to air, these heavy dews contribute their little quota of rich refreshing to the soil itself.

“Oh blessed dew of the speech of God.” How faithful and constant is thy coming! How thou visitest us in the still hours and in the hours of shadow! How dost thou utter thy wisdom almost inaudibly! We see no cloud, we hear no sound, and yet thy presence is with us and our souls are rejoicing. Thy love bathes our souls with delight. We bow down beneath its gentle pressure in adoring gratitude. The fragrance of our souls goes forth to thee as every pore of our being opens at this soft touch. We are alone with thee, and thou speakest to our hearts. Thou canst not come to us thus in the broad

light of the busy day, and we bless thee for the still hours in which our souls are charged anew with life.

Whenever in the hours of night I waken to hear the winds soughing in the thick boughs of the oaks above my roof, I know that I shall find no dew in the morning. It falls only in stillness. And if my soul be perturbed with any wind of passion, or any restlessness, how well I know that I am not in that receptive state in which God's heavenly dew can distil upon me. How can the still small voice of His speech be heard, if I be not quiet?

And how often is it literally in the night season that these spiritual refreshments come. How full are the Psalms and Prophets of this. "I have remembered thy name O Lord in the night"—"With my soul have I desired thee in the night."

"My soul shall be satisfied as with marrow and fatness;  
And my mouth shall praise thee with joyful lips:  
When I remember thee upon my bed,  
And meditate on thee in the night watches."

Ps. lxiii. 5, 6.

But most wonderful of all are those words that

tell us how true it was of our Lord also, that "the dew lay all night upon His branches." "And it came to pass in those days that He went out into a mountain to pray, and continued all night in the prayer of God."—A unique expression for a prayer unlike other prayers, and implying as Prof. Godet has so beautifully shown, the most intimate and loving communion between the Father and the Son.

A dear friend who has been often in my garden sent me lately these sweet thoughts of McCheyne on this subject—

"In Hosea the gift of the Holy Spirit is compared to dew, 'I will be as the dew unto Israel.' Now it is peculiarly true of the dew that it moistens every thing where it falls; it leaves not one leaf unvisited; there is not a tiny blade of grass on which the diamond drops do not descend; every leaf and stem of the bush is burdened with the precious load; just so it is peculiarly true of the Spirit, that there is not a faculty, there is not an affection, or power, or passion of the soul, on which the Spirit does not descend—working through all, refreshing, reviving, renewing, recreating all. And if we are really in Christ Jesus, abiding in Him by faith

we are bound to expect this supernatural power to work through our understanding."

But while my garden rejoices in all these blessings, rain and showers and dews, still such is the excessive heat and dryness of this climate that without one more gift it would often be desolate. But as I have said before, the very centre of my little domain is "a spring of water whose waters fail not." This it is that makes glad my garden. And now I must at last redeem my promise to give its little history.

In accepting this location as my future home, the one pressing necessity to be met first of all, was the supply of water, and some friends came over with me to discuss the matter. The valley below me was full of its healing springs, and other springs of pure water gushed all along the hill-side. But from this one spot, so far beyond the others in all else, the gift of water seemed strangely withheld. So we stood rather sadly in the little hollow yonder, looking at the bracken and rushes at our feet.

"This is at least a damp spot," I said; "why may there not be a spring below the surface?"

My good friend smiled a little as he answered: "Because if it *could* be there at all it *would* be."

there already. The soil is so sandy that there is nothing to hinder it from springing up."

To this wisdom I could make no answer; but just then his little boy who had come with a garden trowel in his hand, stooped to dig up a pretty fern, and as our eyes followed his work we saw as the roots were lifted, bright drops of sparkling water bubbling up. "A good omen at least," I urged—"If a little springs up, why not more?" So a man was soon set to work. A space was excavated; the water rushed in and filled it, and when allowed to settle, it was perfectly clear and pure. But it failed to overflow, and therefore it was not yet a spring. Again he dug deeper, but with the same result. It was clear and full to the brim, but after a long waiting, there was no more. There was plainly some mystery about the matter, and one after another those who were counted wise in such matters came to examine it—but could give no explanation. Still my instructions were—"Dig deeper." This had gone on for some days, the wonder constantly increasing how there should be so much water and no more, when as I stood watching the workman he gave a sudden shout, "Ah, lady, I've got it!"

"Got what?" I asked.

"An old underdrain," he answered, as he went on to explain how in the first settlement of the country, a very rude but effectual underdrain was often made by laying the trunks or branches of trees in a trench, and then covering them with earth. Such a one had been laid here, it was plain, from a once copious spring; but now as soon as the axe had done its work, and the tree was removed, it ceased to steal away this treasure of waters, and to carry them along this hidden pathway to the broad stream in the valley. And now up gushed at once the living waters, and overflowed, and overflowed, as though they would sweep all before them. It has flowed ever since, and so abundantly that it could quench the thirst of thousands, daily. It meets all the needs of my home, and all the needs of my flowers, and when it has fed the little fountain below, and performed all its manifold services, there is still the half of it to flow away.

I always associate this deep spring with that promise of our Lord—"The water that I shall give him, shall be in him a well of water, springing up into everlasting life." Yet in reality, how few know either the fulness or the overflow.

How few can call the gift of the Spirit to their souls, a well for depth, and a fountain for freshness. How few can claim in their inner life, the spontaneity and the unwearied energy of a fountain.

It is not every home that has an unfailing spring. The majority of the country-folk are well content with pumps: and it is the pump rather than the fountain, that may best represent the activity of a multitude of Christian workers. We all know the law of a pump; that it is simply a stroke and a stream, another stroke and another stream; and then when you stop, it stops. In like manner we see all around us, effort, effort, with blessing following, but short-lived blessing: then redoubled effort till the laborers grow weary. And yet a pump is a good thing. I am only saying that a fountain is far better.

I have, however, a most vivid recollection of an old pump, familiar to my childhood, that had a sad trick of running down. How often have I stood looking on, as the vain attempt was made to raise it. Up and down the strong hands would ply the handle, swifter and swifter, till the sigh of utter impatience would be heard. And then as

the last resource, some water would be brought from another well, with which to start it; but still, as soon as it was left to itself, down it would go, and the same process have to be renewed. Is the antitype far to seek? The soul that has lost all its own power, and that can only borrow a brief stimulus from some other full soul, and then sink back into its own emptiness—there is something utterly wrong about it all. Such lives are not according to the purpose and provision of our Lord.

The old prophets were full of the thought of spiritual spontaneity. The first psalm is alive with it: the tree is planted by the rivers of water, and that secures its growth and fruitfulness. But nowadays, Christians seem ever sinking into a stupor from which they try to rouse themselves by galvanic shocks. Only a second-class work can ever be the result. The first great need of a servant of Christ is an inner and impelling power, like a fountain springing up. Human energies are full of restless effort: the Spirit of God is full of quiet power. We can never find any thing that will supply its place in the work of God.

And why is it, we all ask sorrowfully, that we

see so little of His power. We know that as truly as we are Christ's, we *have* the Spirit of God, that He does dwell already in each believing heart. There can be no staying of the hand of God in pouring out abundantly, this His best gift. Into every spirit renewed from above the living waters, surely come. But alas, for all our underdrains, that will not let them gush and flow. Some other affection, or interest, or pursuit, enters into the life, and the stream disappears. It matters very little what it is, so it be any thing coming between us and our devotion to our Lord. I can not tell whether that tree, which for a hundred years had caused one spring less to be numbered along the hill-side, were oak or pine. It matters not, it was an underdrain. And ask me not to say, whether this or that pleasure or pursuit be wrong; but let us ask ourselves rather, "does it at all withdraw my heart from God?" A little thing or a great, an evil thing or a good, may alike prove the hindrance. We can not at once live unto ourselves and unto Him who died for us. And what is there so good, that it is worth the loss of the living waters, gushing in our hearts, and overflowing; that can for a moment, be worth a full

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and overflowing, and abiding love and joy and peace. God give us all the grace to go down below the surface of our lives, till somewhere in its hidden depths, we find our hindrance, and thrust it away forever; and so may He fulfil to each of us, His gracious promise—"Thou shalt be like a watered garden, and like a spring of water, whose waters fail not."

VIII.

*The Life Beyond.*



## VIII.

### The Life Beyond.

“Shadow and shine is life, flower and thorn.”

TENNYSON.

“There is no death! The leaves may fall,  
The flowers may fade and pass away;  
They only wait, through wintry hours,  
The coming of the May.”

SIR E. BULWER-LYTTON.

I have come back to my long-deserted cottage and garden. I left them just as the frost began its deadly undoing of my loving labors, and the tender things were hurried off to their winter housing. I stood and watched them, as with all their bright beauty, they were carried away from my sight, to be seen no more, till another spring should come; and then closed the door and came within, saying to myself, “And that is life, to hold our treasures a brief summer-time,

and then to miss them; to abound awhile in all bright things, and then suddenly to be stript and desolate. And yet that which is so taken out of life, is not dead, but living; is not lost, but cared for more tenderly elsewhere, beyond the reach of wind and frost, to be given back to us some coming day, in a new beauty, and with a new joy.

I have been away since that day, in more sunny regions, among the hills and the mountains, watching the glory of the October forests. Surely none who have seen them this year, can soon forget the extraordinary charms they have put on, as though celebrating some jubilee among the years; now arrayed in soft soothing harmonies of color, and then startling us with some group of rich and marvellous contrasts. It is almost enough indeed to reconcile us to their death, to see such glory in their dying; one might apply to them the eulogy pronounced on the thane of Cawdor,

“Nothing in his life  
Became him like the leaving it.”

But to look down from heights where the eye could sweep over thousands of roods of woodland, to see those ruby and golden trees set like

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flower-beds in the deep valleys, to see the hills turn to glowing mosaics, and the mountains purpled with them, till in the sunset glow they paled "though rose and amethyst,"—all this was to have some little earnest of the glory of the new heavens and new earth.

This morning I have re-entered my study. Truly the summer is ended. The blazing wood-fire is heaped high upon the hearth, for warmth and cheer, and the shutters are folded back to give leave to the sunshine to slant in across the floor. The days for my arbor are over.

I could hardly bear to go out and see it—the helpless death and dying everywhere, half covered with heaps of fallen leaves, with bits of broken boughs tossed in their midst. I hurried on, trying to look only at the little life that still lingered, and gathering in my hand a few brave and loyal blossoms. In the days of my summer wealth, I would have disdained them; but as they stand upon my table, they seem as precious as the last smile on the face of one we love. There are only a few sprigs of green or purpled leaves, some graceful grasses draping the vase, and then for flowers, sweet alyssum and mignonette (not very fragrant now), the petunia.

and Drummond phlox, and a few bright faced pansies; and last of all, a few sprays of forget-me-not; alas, what ails the little blue eyes, for they are reddened as if with weeping. Scanty gleanings these, and yet they suffice to fulfil their blessed mission:

“To comfort man, to whisper hope,  
Whene’er his faith is dim;  
For whoso careth for the flowers,  
Will much more care for him.”

As I have placed them thus together, I have found that this simple act, touched a chord of sympathy with heart after heart. I looked round upon one after another in the wide circle of my friends, of whom some in advancing years, many in the mid-day of life, and not a few even at its very dawn, had found themselves stripped of almost all that had been the light of their eyes. And yet how had I seen them cheerfully gather up the little that remained, and thank God without a murmur, that He still permitted them so much of brightness.

And to you, and such as you, shall this hour be sacred. The garden was for the glad, that they might learn to temper joy with thoughtful-

ness. But now the welcome to my fire-side, and these remnants of my garden graith, is for those only, who have known sorrow.

Stricken ones, with wounds too tender for any but God's own hand to touch, come in, if haply He Himself may speak to your hearts. Lonely ones, draw hither in thought, that so some loving smile may light on you. Weary ones, who have found that time is a slow healer, enter, that we may seek some balm of holy patience. And ye who have not so much as dared to say, "I suffer," but must hide it from all eyes, here is your sheltered corner. And as we thus gather, to learn the last lesson from His book of flowers, which surely must be the hardest and yet the wisest, may God give us each the grace to know the sacredness of all true sorrow, and to touch it with no careless hand; and may He give us all the grace not to refuse to be comforted.

And yet, dear friends, we should not do wisely were we to speak much of grief itself. The grief is the unalterable fact; to the world an awful necessity, but to those who are not of the world, a faithful "needs be," the meaning of which they set themselves humbly to learn.

Nor will we seek our deepest lessons first.

As I have considered to-day, how many losses besides those of bereavement, life must meet with as it speeds on its way, how the un pitying frost seizes one blossom after another, I have thought how wise it were to bear this in mind in the early seed sowing and planting, and to cultivate especially such pleasures and pursuits as we may hope to retain the longest.

Come with me for a moment to these wide south windows, and let your eye sweep along that thickly wooded hill—"a hanging wood" as it is called in England. The brilliant tints have all passed; only a few pale clarets still linger. But you can not fail to see that the pine-trees make the glory now. They were barely noticed in the crowded green of summer; now they stand up in all their majesty. And along the more open hill, how beautiful are the groups of fir and cedar. How deep and rich their noontide shadows on the grass. What were autumn and winter without our evergreens; and what were age without the sympathies and affections that no time can chill, and that never can reach their highest value save through some other loss.

By the way, did you ever think out the im-

port of that beautiful promise in Isaiah, "Instead of the thorn shall come up the fir-tree?" Hosea says, "I am like a green fir-tree." In my mind the association of this tree with that which it is like, is so vivid that I soon forget the fir-tree, for the reverence that comes over me for the good and great of earth. In all that we are now looking at, of whatever height, you notice that each has a leader pointing directly upward. That always says to me, "This one thing I do"—"One thing have I desired of the Lord, that will I seek after." The Christian has always one heavenly aim higher than all others. And then beneath that leader, in what perfect balance and symmetry the boughs spread out,—like the fully rounded, much embracing life that should be ours. As with each year the leader rises higher, so is a new circle of boughs formed, and every old circle widened;—like the ever-increasing interests and growing breadth of sympathy, which are so sure to follow a true devotedness to God.

"Where Thou art most  
Beloved, is room for all! the heart grows wide  
That holdeth Thee! a heaven where none doth press  
Upon the other."

And last of all the fir-tree is evergreen;—yes, even brighter now than in the summer. How well I remember those noble trees as they grew upon their native Scandinavian hills, in such luxuriance and grandeur as are never seen here. They alone, would make any land beautiful. And oh, how beautiful would the whole earth be, if each of God's children were like a fir-tree ! “But your poor heart is more like the thorn”— did you say ? Ah well, that is no hindrance to His blessing you, and making you a blessing. It is this very change that He has promised;— “*Instead of the thorn shall spring up the fir-tree.*” This is His everlasting sign that He has said shall not be cut off. Let Him at once replant your heart and life.

But look now at the grace of my elm-tree. See the bold springing arms and interlacing boughs, now that the last leaf is gone, and mark that bright aureola of flame that circles its lofty trunk, where the crimsoned stems of the creeper are still clinging. How the eye never wearies in following all the perfect tracery against the blue sky. It has seemed to me almost more delightful than the summer greenness. And have you never seen in adversity, the true man,

stand out like that, not only in majesty but in grace, quite unharmed by the loss of all that was adventitious, and never until then, fully seen and known?

I am sure that you noticed as you entered, that cut-leaved birch near the walk, with the silver bark of its most graceful trunk, and its brown pendulous branchlets, shimmering through the pale gold of its rapidly thinning leaves:—and does it not remind you of the true woman's self, never so abounding in delicate grace and rare beauty, as when she seems to the common eye to have outlived them?

The oaks too—only look for a moment up into the midst of those grand old arms, that always bring to my mind the most vigorous verse that Cowper ever wrote—fragment as it is—his “Yardley Oak.”

“A giant bulk  
Of girth enormous, with moss-cushioned root  
Upheaved above the sod, and sides embossed  
With prominent wens globose.”

But covered as they now are, only with dull leathery leaves clinging to the last, and giving them a more death-like look, it is not death that

I behold, but essential life. Not one of them is yielding to decay. To not one could it possibly be said, "Cut it down; why cumbereth it the ground?"—for all that each has been to me in the past, that, and even far more will each be to me in the future. I can not think as much of their past life, as of their life that is to be.

That which my mind has been most busy over this morning, is the future of my garden. Accepting this necessity of a passing dreariness, I am not occupied with that. I am looking onward, storing away in safety seeds and bulbs, and directing the decay around me to be gathered up to minister to richer life. Out of these fallen mouldering leaves shall yet leap the life that shall be "beautiful exceedingly." I am planning for another summer that is to be. Tomorrow I must go forth and plant some of my bulbs in the chilly soil. As I do it, I shall have before me a vision of hope. I shall see the swelling buds. I shall hear the singing of birds. The great joy of a new life will fill my heart. No, it is not all ended, and here upon the threshold of death, seems the true beginning of the new year. Now every plan is matured, every purpose settled; and very much must now be

done if I am to have any real delight in another summer. In the midst of the gloom, I summon all my skill to the happy task of making ready for that bright future.

And thus it seems to me that in any true view of life, the coming on of age brings out into such prominence the life beyond, that instead of weary retrospect, a bright anticipation fills the heart; and all of this life assumes to the eternal life, a relation so like that of infancy to maturity, that the spirit can indulge in the most eager dreams of youth. Blessed "second childhood" this, for all who find it. We lose most precious hours when we only sit down in our gardens to brood over their desolations. Listen to this earnest remonstrance from a woman's soul:—

"Blaspheme not thou thy sacred life, nor turn  
O'er joys that God hath for a season lent  
Perchance to try thy spirit, and its bent,  
Effeminate soul and base—weakly to mourn.  
There lies no desert in the land of life;  
For e'en that tract that barredest doth seem,  
Labored of thee in faith and hope, shall teem  
With heavenly harvests, and rich gatherings, rife.  
Haply no more, music and mirth and love,  
And glorious things of old and younger art,  
Shall of thy days make one perpetual feast:

But when these bright companions all depart,  
Lay there thy head upon the ample breast  
Of Hope,—and thou shalt hear the angels sing above.” \*

And by the side of this let me place another sonnet, by Mrs. Browning, entitled, “Patience Taught by Nature”:

“‘O dreary life!’ we cry, ‘O dreary life!’  
And still the generations of the birds  
Sing through our sighing, and the flocks and herds  
Serenely live, while we are keeping strife,  
With Heaven’s true purpose on us, as a knife  
Against which we may struggle. Ocean girds  
Unslackened, the dry land: savannah-swards  
Unweary sweep: hills watch unworn; and rife,  
Meek leaves drop yearly from the forest-trees,  
To show, above, the unwasted stars that pass  
In their old glory. O Thou God of old!  
Grant me some smaller grace than comes to these,—  
But so much patience, as a blade of grass  
Grows by, contented through the heat and cold.”

But if my work of seed sowing called for care,  
how much more this, the planting of my bulbs.  
I must choose the sunniest spot and the ripest  
soil. I must place them where the heavy rains  
will not wash them, nor the frosts lift them.

\* By Frances Anne Kemble.

And only with such painstaking as very few are willing to give, will some of the loveliest succeed. You see that little package on my table covered with foreign stamps. It contains anemones that have just reached me from Rome. There is something exhilarating to me in the thought that I am to have some of the flowers of "the eternal city"—that the dust of past ages wrought into a flower, and then treasured in these dry and knotted and most unshapely of all tuberous roots, is now to ally itself with the dust of this modern world, and grace my garden as they graced those southern hills. This has made indeed the poetry of my garden, that it was so rich in delightful associations. Many a home where I have been the happy guest, has sent some of its treasures hither, to be welcomed and beloved for the giver's sake. There are few things here that have not an honored pedigree. These roses, still so full of buds that are waiting for the Indian summer, speak of the untiring devotion of one who has made it her delight to shed brightness along my path, by all loving, thoughtful kindnesses. My flowers grow almost human in this way, and can you wonder that I sometimes stoop to kiss

them as though they were the beloved givers. So too, all those fair lands beyond the sea where my feet have wandered, have each something here to keep them in remembrance; and how fitly do they speak to me of all the varied influences out of the past, and out of the present, from afar, and near, that come to enrich our lives.

So, my little Roman pilgrims, you are more than welcome to these western shores, and you will carry me back to all that Rome has ever been to me; to her old historians and orators and poets, to the words that were so largely the food of my young intellectual life. In you I shall have living links that will make Virgil and Horace blossom again in the garden of memory, and revive the olden spell of Tacitus and Cicero. I can not cast them aside, and I need not; for do I not find the truth of what Keble has taught us—

“What seemed an idol hymn, now breathes of Thee,  
Tuned by Faith’s ear to some celestial melody.”

“There’s not a strain to memory dear,  
Nor flower in classic grove,  
There’s not a sweet note warbled here,  
But minds us of Thy Love.

O Lord, our Lord, and spoiler of our foes,  
There is no light but Thine; with Thee all beauty glows.”

As I plant my autumn bulbs, it seems so strange in one respect. In the spring I watch every thing; but these I leave unwatched. I give all possible present care, and then go far away, and not an eye will look on, or a hand touch them, for nearly half a year. It seems such an act of faith;—and how like it is to the many things that loved and desired, are yet left behind, not *buried*, but *planted*, biding that time when all that has been committed in faith and hope to Him, who both died and rose again, will be ours.

“Thou bringest all again; with Thee  
Is light, is space, is breadth and room  
For each thing fair, beloved and free  
To have its hour of life and bloom.

“Each heart’s deep instinct unconfessed;  
Each lowly wish, each daring claim;  
All, all that life hath long repressed,  
Unfolds, undreading blight or blame.

“Thy reign eternal will not cease;  
Thy years are sure, and glad, and slow;  
Within Thy mighty world of peace  
The humblest flower hath leave to blow.”

Who that should look upon this earth for the first time, on some dull November day, seeing

only its leafless trees and bare patches of soil, would ever venture to dream of all that it will be, when no more unclothed but clothed upon. But this earthly life must surely bear much the same relation to the heavenly, that winter bears to summer; and most foolishly do we often judge of it, having never seen that glory beyond. As we look over the world with all its wrongs and sorrows, its darkness and degradation, how many are ready to ask, "Is life worth living?" But though God Himself may seem to have turned away from the work of His hands, and to visit it no more, *He never forgets*. His plans are settled, His purposes sure. When once our eyes see "*the end of the Lord*," then we shall know, that "*the Lord is very pitiful, and of tender mercy*." I have been strangely touched to-day in reading some words of Dora Greenwell in a little poem called, "*Agnes among the Sisters*."

"My heart runs o'er  
With pity and with love, for these were made  
For noble creatures, that within the shade  
Kept by man's fraud, and cheated of their right  
In the great Father's heritage of light  
And warmth, have shrunk to mildewed forms like these ;  
So will they die, methinks, *and never know*

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*What life was made of, till they pass above  
To sun themselves forever in the love  
Whose blessed reflex they have missed below."*

To how many others one might apply these words. The great burden of human sorrow would become insupportable to us, did we not learn *habitually* to look at the things which are not seen.

My chief remaining work in my garden this autumn, will be pruning and "cutting back." My choicest and most fruitful vines will have to suffer most. My sweet roses will be cut down nearly to the root. I fondly imagine them endowed with consciousness for a moment, and looking at me in amazement, at such a return for all their fruit and flowers; to be touched not at one point only, but at all points—to find their growth arrested, and life driven back upon itself, as though its energies were not at all wanted. "Dost thou indeed slay us?"—they seem to ask. But lest we should say it—our great Husbandman speaks as He touches us,—“Every branch that beareth fruit, I purge it that it may bring forth more fruit.” It has been well said—“Some of the grandest work which God in the interests of His kingdom has to accomplish, can be trusted only to those, who broken and crushed by earth's

disappointments and failures, nevertheless rise out of it all to say, ‘I am crucified with Christ, nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh, I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me,’ and

“‘Who for all loss high recompense will give;  
Nor now unheeding marks our bitter smart  
When dies *our* project, that His plan may live.’”

It has often occurred to me that if Christians would regard a little more the analogy of nature, they might be spared a vast deal of self-reproach that is quite unmerited. As it is, if permitted for once to render some blessed service to the Lord, forthwith the whole life is tested by that, and its subsequent uselessness deplored. But while Faber is right when he says, “We do perhaps a tenth of the work for God which we might do,” still God only requires the best of His trees to bring forth its fruit in its season. Once doing that, what matters it that for a whole year it can not repeat the act. It needs, and so God gives, that little space of rest; and oftenest too it needs to pass through a second year, in which it yields very little, but is gathering up its forces to be

ready to yield much fruit again. If this plan be thwarted by artificial means, and the poor tree pressed into constant bearing, it soon sinks exhausted; as many a servant of God does, worn out before his time.

A more real trial of faith is this: that the life-work at longest is so soon over; that at the moment often when one seems fully trained and skilful, then he is set aside, and another less skilful takes up the work. Or on the other hand, however serviceable the work has seemed, yet the growth of wisdom puts it all to shame, so that one is tempted to regard it as utterly useless. Improved methods of work, new ardor in the workers, and grand new successes, cast a suspicion of failure on all that has preceded them. Yet the poorer work may have been the sufficient scaffolding, and in ways we know not of, "our failures are worked into the texture of the eternal plans, which can not fail and never falter."

Meanwhile, as to our true place in the continuous work of the world, I think there is a most obvious lesson taught us in the successive circles of growth in a tree. Each has to give place for fresher life to enter; but always that which has

become effete in one way, acquires new power in another. It can never again repeat its work of conveying the nourishment, and so increasing the growth of the tree. But while in that sense it ceases to live, it is no less a portion of the living tree. It is a part henceforth of that tower of strength, of that column, which uplifts the fresher and tenderer growth. So all that God's power and love have wrought in past ages, is now our stay and strength, while He works anew in us for wider growth. Each generation counts one circle in this living tree. Each of us counts one fibre. This continuity of life is a most precious thing to realize, whether it be as individuals looking back to our forefathers, or as the Church looking back through the long line of growth till we find Christ the beginning and the centre. The strength of the past is our strength. And as the work and responsibilities and perils of each succeeding age in which the tree rises higher and higher, are sure to increase, so does God increase His grace, upholding us with more of His might, and nourishing us from wider sources.

Little leaf up among the wild winds, trembling in thy weakness, and drooping with the fierce heat, fear not!—Christ will keep thee green by

pouring fresh currents of life into thy veins, and He will sustain thee by all that strength which He gave once to others, and now adds to thine. All that Christ has ever been for His whole Church, He is for thee—one man, one woman only, one leaf upon that tree. And it is thy blessed privilege, small as thou art, to be both ministered unto and to minister, so that the whole tree may make its increase with the increase of God.

And now as we turn away our eyes at last from my withered garden, waiting for its new life—can we not also wait? and as we wait can we not rejoice?

Yes, one at least rejoices. It seems to her so good and glorious to look thus to the life beyond, that her heart is too full of praise to suffer it to be pent up in silence. She passes over to the organ, and setting free its utmost volume of rich sound, she bids it help her lift up the voice to the God of Hope who will hereafter so fully triumph over all death and sorrow:—

“Hark what a sound, and too divine for hearing,  
Stirs on the earth and trembles in the air!  
Is it the thunder of the Lord’s appearing?  
Is it the music of His people’s prayer?”

“ Surely He cometh, and a thousand voices  
    Shout to the saints and to the deaf are dumb;  
Surely He cometh, and the earth rejoices  
    Glad in His coming who hath sworn, I come.

“ This hath He done, and shall we not adore Him?  
    This shall He do, and can we still despair?  
Come let us quickly fling ourselves before Him,  
    Cast at His feet the burthen of our care,

“ Flash from our eyes the glow of our thanksgiving,  
    Glad and regretful, confident and calm,  
Then through all life and what is after living  
    Thrill to the tireless music of a psalm.

“ Yea, thro’ life, death, thro’ sorrow and thro’ sinning  
    He shall suffice me, for He hath sufficed:  
Christ is the end, for Christ was the beginning,  
    Christ the beginning, for the end is Christ.” \*

As heart and voice soared upward each eye was lifted also—and at that moment I saw what I had never so seen before. Above the organ hung a picture, a gift from the city of the golden gate. The massive frame held simply a large cross of the choicest abalone-shell, draped with the most exquisite of sea-weeds. Just then the light of the fully opened window streamed in upon it, lighting up the cross till it shone like

\* “St. Paul,” by Frederick W. H. Myers.

one of the pearl gates of heaven, while it brought out in the most distinct yet delicate relief every tissue of the fair frail sea flowers. I had always counted it among my treasures, but now its beauty and significance shone in a new light.

Yes, God makes a garden for Himself in the very sea. "*Whatsoever the Lord pleased* that did He, in heaven, and in earth, *in the sea*, and *in all deep places*." Down in those dark depths, away from all human sight, it pleased Him to create this marvel of beauty. The chill waves could not thwart Him as He built for the humblest of His creatures a house of pearl; and in the midst of the bitter brine, beating restlessly, He nourished these fragile flowers.

How transfigured they look as they are lifted up upon the cross! Yes, blessed Lord, Thy cross took Thee down into the deep, where all the billows and the waves went over Thee. Thou couldst say as none other, "Out of the depths have I cried unto Thee, O God." But now Thy cross is no more in the great darkness, but stands jewelled with light. It is no more in the depth, but highly exalted; and there is nothing so little, and nothing so hidden, that thou wilt not lift it up in triumph on Thy cross till it shine

in Thy glory. Thy suffering is finished forever, but Thy redemptive reign is not yet ended. Thou art "expecting," and we are "waiting." Thou art ascended now, but what is it but that Thou didst first descend into the lower parts of the earth. Thou couldst go nowhere save to lead captivity captive; and when cometh the end then they that bow before Thee shall be "those in heaven, and those on earth, and those under the earth." Alike out of the depths of our anguish, and out of the depths of Thy universe, canst Thou bring the trophies of Thy dying love, and Thine all-sufficient sacrifice. Lord Jesus, what sudden light may yet flash upon the glory of Thy cross! What poor despised things may yet be glorified together with Thee!

The last cadence of the song had long since died away; for what could one do but sit in a hushed silence, looking upward to that sun-lighted cross! And then once more, but very softly now, the simple melody went on:—

"What can we do, o'er whom the un beholden  
Hangs in a night with which we can not cope?  
What but look sunward, and with faces golden  
Speak to each other softly of a hope?

“Can it be true, the grace He is declaring?  
Oh let us trust Him, for His words are fair!  
Man, what is this, and why art thou despairing?  
God shall forgive thee all but thy despair.”

Dear friends, who have forgotten your sorrows  
in the consolations of Christ, I leave you there  
before that blessed vision, of which my picture  
is but the shadow—of the cross glorified and  
glorifying.

“Now the God of hope fill you with all joy  
and peace in believing, that ye may abound in  
hope through the power of the Holy Ghost.”



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